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A WOMAN'S STORY.

BY

MRS. S. C. HALL.

"——— those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day."

WORDSWORTH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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A WOMAN'S STORY.

CHAPTER I.

"The innocent brightness of a new-born day
Is lovely yet:
The clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality:
Another race hath been, and other palms are won."

WORDSWORTH.

ALTHOUGH there is nothing to gratify self-love in the distinction I claim, it is, notwithstanding, very pleasant for a person—such as I am—who has acquired a habit of observation, and who loves to listen rather than talk, to be considered a NOBODY—a sort of harmless

'familiar'—permitted to go and come, to move about, to read, work, or nod in a corner, without giving offence, and without being noticed, except by a bright look, a kind smile, or to be greeted, on entrance, perhaps, by words like these—

"Oh, we are so glad to see *you!* sit down; and, as we never make a stranger of *you*, we will go on with our talk, just as if you were 'nobody;' that is exactly what you like."

And so it is; I desire to glide noiselessly through life, observing and thinking, not musing and dreaming; studying the characters of my friends, not to pry into their secrets, or display their foibles to the world, but from an earnest wish to practise what would give them pleasure, and to avoid causing them pain. I daily balance the motives which impel or impede the movements of the circle that forms my world; that is sufficient to interest me day by day, while things and events of greater import hang about my heart, or crowd upon my memory. I have lived in wonderful times, and seen what the past would have rejected, had it been foretold by the

voice of prophecy, and to which the future will hardly give credit. Yet, on the whole, comparing that which now is, with that which must be hereafter, I think my faculty of observation—I say, *on the whole*—has given me more pleasure than pain. I have silently chronicled within my heart of hearts many noble deeds, of which the world has heard nothing; and, by much comparing, and much pondering, I have been able to clear up and remove, to my own satisfaction, and frequently to the satisfaction of others, doubts and suspicions thrown upon actions that deserved an immortality for their purity and unselfishness. I have seen great hearts, although worn out by mighty beatings, accomplish high purposes in the end, and so depart, with their triumph, to the Heaven they were worthy of entering; and I have also seen the mean and base, however prosperous for a time, left to pant out the last hours of unworthy or polluted lives, without consideration and without respect. I have seen people change unconsciously—proud, lonely men pass from old opinions, and embrace new ones, not feverishly,

or with indecent haste, but gliding smoothly with the moving times, mingling in kindlier communion with their fellow-beings, extending their sympathies, and combining in one great brotherhood those from whom, a few years before, they would have turned with most unchristian loathing and contempt. Preserving the semblance of the old, when all things have become new, men do not seem to understand how they mock and contradict themselves, by talking as if they still held by the shadows of the past; while, in reality, they grasp, and are with, and of, the realities of the present; it is a sort of innocent self-delusion that—one of the things which give to an observant old woman a right to the luxury of a quiet smile.

The rush of new sympathies into society is among the most marvellous of the movements I have seen; and I sometimes wonder if the wear and tear of so many exciting causes will not exhaust us, before our time; but we still continue to take excellent good care of ourselves, however much our sympathies are acted on. I do not know one comfortable, well-to-do sort of person, they have as yet hurried

to an untimely grave; and it is a great blessing to think, that while the poor benefit by being drawn nearer to the rich, the rich are none the less prosperous for thinking of, and assisting, the poor. I have seen—but why do I use the privilege of years to this extent?—I have seen nothing but what all other persons might have seen, had they only enjoyed the privilege of being considered a 'NOBODY,' and used such privilege as a means of observation. It is astonishing what books might be made, and histories recorded, out of the every-day occurrences of life; how dull and spiritless fiction would seem when contrasted with facts—how the ideal would shrink into insignificance before the real—how the actual would distance the poetic, and the hearts of human beings beat and throb at tales of simple, unadorned, and unexaggerated truth; this has been said scores of times, and as frequently forgotten.

The progressings of some I knew in my earlier days may, I think, be as interesting to others as they were to me; while the lessons of life taught by them, and which are graven on

my heart, might be useful—more especially to such as float upon the surface, and never dive beneath the waves, of time.

There is a MEMORY, always with me, of one who, some years ago, made what is called a 'great sensation' in the word—a 'beauty,' with enough of wit to have fascinated if she had been born a 'fright;' with learning acquired I can scarcely tell how; in short, a GENIUS rare as extensive—and well garnished by womanly grace, a sweet, playful, natural manner, and a generous and feeling heart. The reality and romance of this fair creature's life were interwoven with many singular people, and as singular events. A number of circumstances, which, at several periods of her brilliant career, were involved in the deepest mystery, are not a mystery to me; they will be readily recalled, and with no ordinary emotion, by the few who still personally remember Helen Lyndsey; while the many who (so devouring is Time) have almost forgotten her name, will, perhaps, attach some degree of interest to the development of feelings and actions, apparently, so contradictory. But I will let

the story of her singular and fitful life speak for itself, going back to the time when I first saw her, in the arms of her nurse, enveloped in flannel and lace, and all kinds of old-fashioned baby finery, a huge coral and bells tinkling at her side, and her deep blue lustrous eyes, even then completely shadowed over by the longest and thickest fringe that ever rested on the cheek of infant beauty. I little thought then——but I must, as I have just said, let my story speak for itself; yet it is my intention less to record a 'story,' than merely to note down people and events as they appeared or occurred; especially those that were connected with the remarkable history of this 'life.'

My duty will, in reality, be little more than this.

The parents of Helen Lyndsey lived in one of those white houses close to the Firgrove, on the broad, bold heath of Hampstead; there are gardens in front of the houses, and they command a view which, whether you look towards the deep, grey shadowy common of Finchley, with its clouds of mist rising from

the murky plain—or on the magnificent extent of mighty London, gorging the vale of the sweeping Thames with its multitude of palaces and marts, its strangely-mingled population, its steeples and freighted argosies, its charities and miseries, its vastness and its noisomeness, its amazing power as a city of fearful extent—is a view which cannot be equalled in our own proudly-beautiful land. In one of these houses Mr. and Mrs. Lyndsey resided, rejoicing, long after they were married, in having no children —Mr. Lyndsey disliking 'juveniles,' because they were noisy, and Mrs. Lyndsey hating everything under eighteen, because it made the room untidy, and endangered her old china. At one time I imagined no human brain could exist with so limited a number of ideas as were contained within the head of Mr. Lyndsey, but that was before I had the pleasure of knowing his wife, to whom, however, the word 'gentle' could never be applied with any degree of truth—she was, poor thing, both ungentle and unquiet; a snappish, fidgetty sort of little woman, never entertaining more than one idea per week, which she wore thoroughly

out before she had done with it, and without having a clear notion of what she complained of, or what she desired; always finding fault with somebody, and ever uncomfortable if she had not some one to find fault with; in short, she was always wanting something it was next to impossible to obtain. She had one set of books a month from the library, which she never read; she knitted after breakfast, grumbled at the servants, and paid visits; she slept between dinner and tea; and she knitted in the evening. Mr. and Mrs. Lyndsey had married too late in life to have any sympathies in common—her bitter nothingness was harder to endure than her husband's insipidity—and yet they got through the routine of suburban existence respectably; they 'paid their way' every month, returned visits and dinners (and visits and dinners in the country, as Hampstead considered itself some years ago, were not the mere card-leaving, light, easy-got-over things of the present day) punctually; and gave a pound each, at Christmas, to furnish the poor of the district with coals and blankets —it was only at that period of the year Mrs.

Lyndsey suffered the idea of poverty to enter beyond the garden-gate; if stray beggars, or fortune telling gipsies, asked for charity, she invariably reminded them that they had the parish to go to.

I have written that at one time I believed Mr. Lyndsey a man of few ideas; when I became more observant, I found he was only a man of few words. He had been much abroad in his early youth, at the period when travel conferred distinction; yet he never alluded to that circumstance, or, indeed, to any other of the past; he avoided all mention of foreign lands, and would steal quietly out of the room when the movements of our troops were discussed; while Mrs. Lyndsey lost no opportunity of declaring that she loved the French as a nation—they made such sweet lace, and such fine cambric! Mr. Lyndsey was, as his wife often bitterly said, "absent when present, and had as well never be present at all." There was a rumour of his having been once strikingly handsome, and quite 'the man of fashion;' his features were certainly fine, but they were so immoveable, and his eyes so

indrawn and dull, that you might as well have looked to a statue for varied expression as to him, except that occasionally his cheek would burn and flush, and he would start, not apparently from any external cause, but as if aroused by some internal pain; indeed, I used to think he suffered from spasm, and once asked him, after a flush and start, when we were quite alone, if I could do anything for him, but he covered his face with his hands, and walked out of the room. As to fashion, I never knew him to dress otherwise than as a sober citizen, and his wife complained bitterly of his want of 'style.'

Mr. Lyndsey evinced some interest in a stout-built, heavy cob, 'equal to sixteen stone,' that had never warmed into a gallop in its life, and spent much of his time in the stable—always observing to Jerry Leary, an old Irish groom who had lived with his father, that he would 'back Brown Bob against any 'bit of blood' on the road,"—poor gentleman, he generally stroked Bob down one sleek side, and then down the other, in a dreamy sort of way, and usually left the stable with the same

observation—to which Jerry invariably replied "Ay, bedad, sir!" and then Jerry would follow his master with his large, loving eyes, and murmur, "Poor dear gentleman." Notwithstanding Mrs. Lyndsey's proficiency in the art of ingeniously tormenting, she would often have lacked subject for murmur and complaint, but for the existence and occasional presence of Jerry Leary. Jerry kept out of his mistress' way as much as possible; he lived over the stables (she had long forbidden his entering the house), and skulked about to avoid getting into her sight—as he said, "more like a thief than a man!"—his sole enjoyment was in the society of Brown Bob, and a grey horse that nothing could fatten, called "Staggers," upon which he rode whenever Mr. Lyndsey visited the house of business in some city place, Change Alley, I believe—a duty he performed every Saturday, come what would; and occasionally on other days.

As I have said, neither Mr. nor Mrs. Lyndsey were young when they married, and they had quarrelled and sulked through ten years of wedded life, when Mrs. Lyndsey became

seriously indisposed—at least she said she was so—and Mr. Lyndsey, after the lapse of a few days, despatched Jerry into town to fetch a doctor. I had owed them a visit for more than a week, and knowing Mrs. Lyndsey's punctual habits—people of small minds are always punctual in small things, however much they neglect greater—I feared I might be transferred from her ostentatious visiting-book into her black book, and was driving my pony leisurely up the hill to pay my debt, when I espied Jerry on his ghostly-looking horse, zig-zag-ing downwards; he touched his hat, which he always wore in a sailor-like fashion at the back of his head, while his red hair matted round it; and drawing his bridle up with a jerk, said, "Don't stop me, ma'am, if you please, the mistress is very bad intirely, and I'm going for a doctor." I expressed my surprise and sorrow. "Bedad its true—and very bad intirely she must be, for the women say she hasn't uttered a cross word to them these two days; and you'd think the life would lave the poor masther; 'Make haste, Jerry,' he says, 'and don't stop to draw breath

till you're back—for I fear she's going—she hasn't said a syllable about the putting up clean window curtains, though they have been hung three days longer than usual."

"Then ride on, good Jerry."

"God bless you, ma'am, I will—I little thought she'd be the first to go—for, in general, it's the best that goes first."

I was received by Mr. Lyndsey as heretofore; he was neither depressed nor elevated; he said Mrs. Lyndsey's spirits had been giving way lately; she scolded less, but wept more, and her appearance was strangely altered. In due time the physician arrived, had a long interview with the lady, and announced to Mr. Lyndsey, with a smiling countenance, there was little doubt that in a very short time, he would have an addition to his family. Mr. Lyndsey did not bear this news with his accustomed fortitude—he told the doctor he must be mistaken, turned red, and then really white, sat down and rose up, and when he found he attracted observation, suddenly enquired whether boys or girls cried most—and, as the doctor did not at once reply to the

question, Mr. Lyndsey seized his arm, and looked earnestly in his face; the doctor then shook his head, and said, "It depended on the disposition, he must take his chance." This was all that passed below; presently Mrs. Lyndsey's own maid, a poor, scared, heart-broken looking creature, requested I would go to her mistress, who considered me "NOBODY," and would be glad to see me. I found her in a state of considerable agitation, and, as usual, her consolations were but the aggravations of misfortune; she could not have believed it—she always disliked children; there was only one comfort, she might not live—there was another, the child might not live—there was a third, suppose she lived and the child lived, it might be a boy; then it could be sent out to nurse; on its return, forwarded to school; after it came from school, to college, and when it was of age, it would go abroad, or marry, or do something—and so she could get rid of it altogether—*that* was a comfort. But she should have no comfort not she, she never had, never could have! other people had, but not she. No, no, she

wouldn't be a bit surprised, after all, if it turned out a girl, just to vex her—a little messy girl, that one would be obliged to have at home sometimes, or else people would talk; that would break the china, and never shut a door after her, and want a maid; and she would be obliged to give up her blue dressing-room for a nursery: there, that was a trial—her pretty blue dressing-room!

Fatigued with the unusual quantity of ideas that had crowded into her head, she twisted them all into one; though she felt assured a girl would come to vex her, still she would prepare only for a boy—that was what she would do; she would get ready a basketful of blue, white, and pink cockades, and white, blue, and pink satin hats, nothing else—and so we parted. The expected addition to Mr and Mrs. Lyndsey's household was an extraordinary stimulus to the conversational powers of the inhabitants of the hamlet of Hampstead; it was "so unexpected," "so unlooked for," "so strange," "after ten years," and "at the lady's time of life," and so forth. The three maiden sisters who lived at Green Cottage, in

the swampy locality which looks so pretty, and feels so damp, called the 'Vale of Health' —those three sisters stoutly declared they would not believe it; and even Mrs. Lyndsey's particular friend, Mrs. Brevet-Major Cobb, who, by dint of pushing and talking, had established for herself the unenviable reputation of a 'clever woman,' was positively indignant, declaring, in an authoritative, undeniable tone, that if "Mrs. Lyndsey intended to have a family, she should have had it at once, and been done with it—that she, for one, should not countenance such goings on, even in her dearest friend. It would be different if she had begun in proper time; but at her age—it was too bad—what could *she* know about a baby! She took no interest in anything living. She had the cat drowned because it had kittens; and never suffered a servant to marry, because their children would cry, and come to the workhouse." Mr. Lyndsey received the congratulations of the little, broad, round-faced major with the air of a martyr, repeating what he had said often

before, and frequently afterwards—"We are all in the hands of a wise Providence!"

The Cobbs in those days were great people at Hampstead—very great. In the first place they were reputed wealthy. They lived in a large, awkward house; with an uncountable number of doors, and a multitude of small windows, which, if the trees that wooded in it had been removed, would have commanded a noble prospect; but the major loved the trees, and his lady patronised them, "Because," she said, "they kept the eyes of the commonalty from intruding upon them in the way that people of note are always intruded upon in England." The major had lost a leg in India, where he had spent, according to Mrs. Cobb, "the flower of his youth;" and where she assured me she had married him when she was quite a child. I observed that she never made this statement in her husband's presence, who excited her ire one day, by saying, that "she certainly was, in one sense, his *senior* officer." The major was a hot-tempered, fiery little man, with a round, red face, in which his nose and small light-blue eyes were more than half

buried; he was a great martinet, positive and full of self-esteem, as short persons generally are; his voice was so shrill and sharp, and its intonation so false, that when he finished a sentence, which he often did without ever completing the sense, you were led by the sustained squeak to imagine that he only paused for breath. I have looked for a continuance, until, in an angry tone, he would exclaim—"Well, madam! what are you waiting for?" Yet, with these personal disadvantages, he possessed many of the fine qualities of an English soldier. The major had risen from the ranks, and was (much to his wife's anguish) proud that he had so risen. He was brave as a lion, and the unflinching heroism of truth could be traced in all his words and actions; he abominated what he called 'humbug;' and it was really marvellous how the major and his wife continued to live together, differing as they did upon one or two most material points. The major wished to be considered a plain soldier, his wife panted for the distinction of a fine lady; he loved to hear the truth, and to speak the truth, she

did not care whether she was amused by truth or falsehood, so long as she was amused; and as to speaking the truth, by one of the unaccountable mistakes so often made, her great ambition was to be considered 'a creature of the imagination'—this she expected, as a matter of course, from all her acquaintances. 'A creature of the imagination'—with a roll of frizzed, pale hair, standing out and about a heap of huge, misshapen features, hard and high, the summit surmounted by a crimson or yellow turban; while a figure, tall, thin, and angular, in those 'unbustled' days, was thrust into as narrow a compass as possible, so that when the lady walked, or rather tramped, along the road, her steps extended her dress to its full dimensions. It was exceedingly ludicrous to see Mrs. Brevet and her husband setting out for 'morning parade,' as he called his walk on the heath; at first they went off in regular matrimonial fashion, she stooping on one side to take his arm, and he erect and stiff, making the most of his inches, stumping along right valiantly; then, after the first pause to inhale the air and look at the land-

scape, Mrs Brevet would start forward, the feathers in her hat streaming like a pennon during her quick march of about fifty yards, when she would suddenly halt, and then face about and meet the little man, only to leave him again behind; everybody laughed at them, and though the lady's presumption and bad tact annoyed her neighbours, still it would have been difficult to get on well without 'the Indians of Haverstock Hall.' The lady was universally known as 'Mrs. Brevet,' from a little domestic 'squabble' that once took place between her and her husband in 'the Library,' as the small book and stationer's shop of the village was called. The military couple had been waited on, at their residence, by the long, pale man of books, who, being, unfortunately, only a retail dealer in human intellect, and not a publisher thereof, had never managed to increase either in pocket or person, and Mrs. Cobb assured him, with a condescending nod of her scarlet turban, that she would certainly patronize him. Accordingly, after the various Indian packages had been opened, and the house decked out with

china, and living and dead birds, and mats, and gongs, and various implements of war, and cases of butterflies, smelling of camphor, and tiger skins (Mrs. Brevet said the tigers had all been shot by her husband, only he did not like it mentioned), the worthy couple sallied forth to the library for the purpose of having their cards printed.

"In large letters, if you please, sir, fine large letters," said the lady, "with the address underneath, upon a flag, or something pretty of the kind, indicating the Major's profession."

"Would you like Roman letters, madam?" inquired the librarian.

"No, sir, cer-tain-ly NOT; English letters, sir, large and commanding, with 'Haverstock Hall,' on a flag, underneath."

"Shall I take down the name exactly, or would you write it, madam?"

"No, you write it—Mrs. Major Cobb."

Her husband, who had been waiting at the door, turned round abruptly.

"No, madam, that won't do, no tricks with the Army List, no false colours at the Horse Guards, I am *not* full Major."

"But you are called Major!"

"By courtesy: I am only Brevet-Major."

"But one can't put *that* on a card, sir," replied the lady, "you really are very foolish: everyone calls you Major."

"Then let it be plain Mrs. Cobb."

"And sink my position? No! I've gone through too much for it," she answered, tossing her feathers.

"Then, madam, I say, if you *must* have a title, let it be a true one—Mrs BREVET-MAJOR COBB."

She would not hear of this, but stalked out of the shop, leaving the shopkeeper pen in hand, while one or two other attendant customers regretted that "the fun" was so soon over: in the evening the bookseller received a note, directing him to print the cards Mrs. B. Major Cobb; and thus, by a skilful manœuvre, the Major had, to a *certain degree*, his own way which, I have observed, is generally quite as much as any married man can accomplish. Mrs. Brevet had been born in Ireland—a circumstance she concealed with extraordinary precaution; and truly, if her tongue had not

betrayed her, she might have led most persons to believe she had never breathed the air of the Emerald Isle, for she took up every prejudice against the unfortunate country with the determination of a zealot; and this was the great point of sympathy between her and Mrs. Lyndsey—they both entertained the greatest dislike to the old groom, simply because he was Irish. The small world of Hampstead had many other denizens, revolving in the same circle with the Cobbs and the Lyndseys —several lawyers and their families, one or two men of letters, a few merchants, and some who occupied good situations in public offices. The rector was respected, according to the old phrase, by rich and poor, high and low; he was personally beloved, so that the parish church was crowded, while those whose faith led that way, went quietly to the Dissenting chapel, without vaunting their own holiness, or undervaluing the church-going of their neighbours; one of many proofs I have obtained through life that, in nine cases out of ten, it is dislike to the clergymen, and not to the church that keeps so large a portion of

this Protestant country without the church porch. He was a truly good man, that Mr. Mathias, visiting the sick, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and performing the still more difficult deeds of neighbourly love, by healing those little wounds of society, so prone to increase as often to endanger soul and body, made at first by heedless tongues, or heedless actions, by words lightly spoken, or courtesies neglected, or, still worse, by words spoken in bitterness, and repeated by malice and envy, and, perhaps as frequently by people who having no legitimate employment, make their tongues do more than tongues ought ever to undertake or be expected to perform. In truth, our good rector had but one fault, and, sad to say, it was one that became worse and worse daily; he was old, even at the time I write of, and it seemed vain to look abroad for one who could be what, for thirty years, he had been. Mrs. Cobb yielded to his influence, and even Mrs. Lyndsey, with all her grumblings, confessed he was a man sure to make one think too favourably of the world, and therefore it was well he was breaking so fast.

There were several noble, aristocratic houses in the neighbourhood, towards which we usually pointed as we passed the entrance gates, saying, "my Lord This," or "Lady That," lived there; but we never saw their inhabitants except at church, and they held no intercourse with the less influential dwellers of the heath, and valley—sweeping, in their stately and well-appointed equipages, past the humble 'one horse shay,' lofty curricle, or pretty pony carriage of their as happy, but less elevated, neighbours.

Such people gave, we thought, great dignity to Hampstead, and whenever we read their names or doings in the Court Circular, it might be that we held our heads a little higher, and talked of our neighbour's 'presentation' or 'dress' at the Drawing-room with a borrowed consequence. There were individuals in our own circle who panted eagerly to be received, or even noticed by these courtly ones—I could hardly tell why, and fear at times I was even uncharitable in my unspoken censures of those who set so high a value on 'my Lady's' smile, or 'my

Lord's' bow; who preserved a stray visiting card, impressed with a noble name, dusting it carefully, cleaning it, at least twice a-year, with India-rubber, and placing it on the top of the card basket—or who repeated what he had often heard before, that, by special permission, they had the privilege of walking in the grounds of Hollymount, never adding, 'during the family's absence;' yet—and here let me pause a moment to say how useful *self-examination* is, how charitable we are made by diving into our own hearts, and how ashamed we ought thereby to be at our own short-comings;—*this finding out of oneself*, if not capital sport, is an excellent lesson, and one which it is wise to practise at all convenient opportunities—an admirable mode of employing the odds and ends of time. I had left Mrs. Brevet-Major Cobb rubbing away on the worn-out cards of a general, a rajah, and a Lady Caroline Macnab, and, while I wandered up the hill, was indulging the most quiet and sly smile you can imagine at her vanity, which, as I was 'NOBODY,' she had not taken the trouble to conceal from me,

when one of our neighbour's stately carriages passed; the lady pulled the check, and waving her hand to me, I had what seemed a very familiar chat with her for full five minutes. I was pleased that the Misses Saunders, of the Vale of Health, the inhabitants of the Green Cottage, saw me. I could perceive them turning round and watching, whispering, and calculating as to what we were talking about; going a few yards on, they crossed the road and turned back, so that after the carriage drove on, I met them; it was with a very foolish uplifting of mind that I returned Miss Griselda's curtsey, and held out my hand to Miss Jane. At last the elder of the two observed she had seen me talking to Lady Evelyn—she did not know that I was acquainted with her ladyship. I smiled, but did *not* tell her the fact, that our stately neighbour had only spoken of the nature of a clothing society we had established, and of which she wanted to know the particulars, taking a very strange time to do so. When I came to think this over, my better self became ashamed of my other self, particularly when I remem-

bered how I had, in my own mind, sneered at the poor lady, Mrs. Brevet-Major, who had never been disciplined as I had been, or, perhaps, been taught to *think;* so, after musing upon my own littleness and ill-nature, I set myself a penance—it was to visit the Green Cottage before I slept, and tell the ladies why Lady Evelyn had spoken to me on the hill. I remember this little circumstance so well, because, on my homeward walk, I met Jerry, returning from my house, where he had been to communicate the news that Mrs. Lyndsey had presented her husband with a daughter; and, he added, "the nurse, ma'am, desired me to say that it hasn't cried much; and sure that puts me in mind of a story, only I hav'n't time to tell it now—for running about, as I am, the poor bastes in the stable hav'n't had a feed of oats this blessed day; and I was told to leave word everywhere, that the missis, and the baby, and the masther, were as well as could be expected."

I never recal those earlier scenes of Helen's life without a memory of the poor Irish groom; he stands out before my mind's eye

in bold relief, like an awkward gurgoil on some time-honoured building—a quaint, grotesque, unbeautiful thing—yet a thing to be remembered of itself, and for itself. I felt assured he was wound up, in some way, with the thread of Mr. Lyndsey's early life; and that Mrs. Lyndsey hated him chiefly on that account, covering her hatred with the semblance of terror at the effects of the '*evil eye*;' —those narrow-minded, small-souled women are so cunning!

I have all my life had the habit of recalling at night the events of the day, thinking over and jotting down whatever occurred to me. Strangers may glance coldly over such notes: so be it! but they have sometimes been prophetic, and, at all events, I like to travel back with them to the past; I feel my book of memories would be incomplete without them. I shall do this often, I trust, without wearying those who read.

CHAPTER II.

"We look before and after,
And pine for what is not;
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those which tell of saddest thought!"

SHELLEY.

THE allotted month of Mrs. Lyndsey's seclusion was a period of most unheard-of tranquillity in her domestic circle; to her husband it must have been a time of positive contentment. He rode to Change Alley as often as he pleased; he dined at the Jerusalem Coffee-house, and even went to see Mrs. Siddons in what may be called the 'last days' of Lady Macbeth, and no one found fault with him;

he might stay as long as he liked in the stables, and there was no one to chide his delay. Jerry became altogether a different person; his mistress was not in the way to insult him; he held up his head, and walked into the kitchen, and, standing with his back to the fire, even maintained a dispute with the cook touching the boiling of potatoes, just as if he, too, were an in-door servant! Then, whenever he went through the village, everybody stopped him, and asked him questions, and listened to his replies; or to the stories he was fond of telling—*apropos* of everything and nothing. Servants invariably become important during the period of muffled knockers, caudle, and 'kind inquiries;' but poor Jerry had never been important on the heath before, and seemed resolved to make the most of it. "They are all wishing this thing, and that thing, and the other thing," he said, "for the little dawshy darling, which puts me in mind of a story I heard once about a baby—a little heiress, as this will be; it was a vision came to the mother, and she lay thinking of all the wishes herself and other people made for her

child; and so she fell asleep, and thought how one had wished her child wit, and another beauty, and another learning, and another riches, and another a great duke for a husband; and the time had passed away unknownst, and the child was a woman, and the mother saw her beautiful face all soaked in tears; and there was a crowd of people, with bleeding hearts, pointing and gibing at her, and they said she had wounded them with her bright, sharp words; and her fingers, all covered with jewels, turned over the leaves of books in all languages, and though she sat in a chair of diamonds, with the globe for a footstool, there was no happiness about her, only sad trouble; and, though she was the greatest beauty that ever the sun shone upon, yet her husband was far away with other loves, having no heart-love for her.

"And her poor mother bowed her head over her: and 'Mother' darling,' she says, 'why didn't you wish at the first that I should have GOD'S GRACE, and then I couldn't be the mourning creature I am; *that's* wanting to me in all things, so it is. And if I had it, I'd have

all things; whether I had all other things or no to the sight, I'd feel I'd have them: and it's a want of understanding not to make it the first wish to any poor baby that enters this sinful world.' Now look straight at the great sense of that blessed dream," persisted Jerry; "the lady awoke, and there was her little innocent infant smiling on her arm, and she prayed hard and fast that it might have GOD'S GRACE; and so it had, and grew up a beauty, and all the other things, and as happy as forty queens. So when I saw the little darling riz in the nurse's arms at the window, I fell to praying the Lord to mark her to grace, and so he will I hope; and that's my wish for her, poor darlint."

When Mrs. Lyndsey recovered her astonishment at finding herself in a new position, the real mother of a living baby, she drew abundant discomfort from the birth of a daughter. I could hardly believe that this heartlessness was real, it seemed impossible for a woman to be so unnatural; but her selfishness overpowered every other sensation—the child was in her way. Mr. Lyndsey seemed a changed man—

and yet so strangely changed. He kept repeating between his teeth—"poor baby"—"poor little innocent"—"poor, poor baby;"—and though he did not resent, as I thought he should have done, his wife's neglect of the child—for she wished it to be nursed out of the house—still, either from a sort of half sleepy opposition, or some new-sprung and unacknowledged tenderness, Mr. Lyndsey forgot the noise, and insisted upon the engagement of a nurse. The doctor was fortunate in his selection, and the child throve apace; in a few months it became a perfect model of beautiful babyhood; but its temper was violent, though the paroxysms of wilfulness were neither frequent nor of long continuance. The nurse was not slow to discover the mother's want of natural affection; she therefore sought to conceal rather than to overcome the defects of the child. One day Mr. Lyndsey heard it crying, and inquired the cause of the noise; the nurse affirmed that little miss wanted something very unfit for her to have.

"Let her have it, by all means," said the

father; "anything is better than that dreadful wailing."

"Although that baby *is* an ill-tempered little vixen," observed Mrs. Lyndsey, "if you did not treat her cruelly, she would not cry in that violent way."

The nurse conceived herself obliged to pacify the baby by yielding to all her wishes, which she did; and this was Helen Lyndsey's first triumph. And let no one smile at this as a victory of little consequence; it is a leading point for the future. The little creature, though violent and excitable, was gentle and affectionate as the fondest mother's heart could have desired when the paroxysm was over; repentant too, if, in her anger, she had slapped her nurse, or inflicted angry looks on any one: apprehensive, and showing, when not eighteen months old, a decided aversion to her mother's presence; caresses she had never offered to her child, beyond the cold kiss on Helen's high and expansive forehead 'when there was company,' and the child's beauty had been strongly commended, and it was pretty to evince something like maternal tenderness. But it was

evident the little maid loved her father; she would crow and stretch out her hands to him whenever he divided his attention between her and the brown cob; truth to tell, he became as frequent a visitor to the nursery as to the stable. And, next, Helen evinced a strong partiality for Jerry. The window of the dressing-room, converted, as Mrs. Lyndsey had predicted, into a nursery, overlooked the stable-yard, and Jerry, despite his bowed legs, would dance and caper for the "little darlint," so as to give her extreme delight. She would watch for him, express much annoyance at his delay, and, when at last he came, scream and spring with pleasure. This partiality, as the child grew older and fond of talking, became known to Mrs. Lyndsey, who mingled cunning and folly together, and appeared to have seized the idea that all Irishmen had evil eyes, and that Jerry's eye was not only especially evil, but that its evil influence was particularly directed against her child. She therefore ordered the window panes to be painted over, and when Helen, as usual, made her way to the window, climbed on the chair to look at

her favourite, and could see nothing, in one of her paroxysms of temper she seized a pink china shepherdess and flung it through the glass. While shouting with joy at her exploit, she did not see her mother enter, until she felt the blow which struck her down. Poor child! it was a sad earnest of after mismanagement and cruelty, of outbreaks that were redeemed by no softness or kindness of disposition, and of the practice of that which children suffer so much from in this world—injustice. Parents would, I have thought, be frequently shocked if they paused to consider the iniquity of their injustice towards their offspring, not perhaps in great matters, but in the small, daily occurrences of actual life. How often is the child punished for crying, without investigating the cause of its tears; how frequently do we vent upon a child the temper which sheer cowardice averts from a companion! We punish the child for untruths, while we practice before it the 'got up' courtesies, and all the habitual falsehoods of society; we lack the commonest patience in our teaching, expecting the seed we sow to produce immediately, and *all* soils to

yield an equally abundant harvest, forgetting that one child is born to smiles and another to shadows, and that it is quite impossible to educate two children exactly on the same plan, and absurd to expect equal excellence in all things from both.

We bestow unnecessary pains on the clever and the quick, while we neglect the dull, slow child, who more especially needs culture—forgetting that the moral faculties, the faculties of our better nature, are probably in greater perfection in the calm than in the brilliant mind; we embitter the innocent and happy time of youth, and force it into maturity before its strength is equal to the struggles of advanced years; we are unjust to our children in a hundred ways before they leave the protection of our roofs for the more flagrant injustice of the school, and we continue so, from a want of the valuable habit of self-examination, quite unconscious, or, it may be, culpably careless, of the sufferings we inflict, and of their probable results. After a time, the generality of boys fight against injustice, either openly or secretly, according to their tempera-

ments and circumstances; but girls, with few exceptions, though they outwardly submit, become suspicious of those parents who, from not entering into their characters, and studying their natures, have treated them unjustly; thus arises the secrecy and mistrust which parents so frequently complain of, where heart should be open to heart, and where to feel and to confide would be from child to parent one and the same thing. Whenever we act unjustly, in thought or deed, we secure to ourselves a certain and sorrowful retribution. Mrs. Lyndsey had been warned more than once by our good clergyman that she mismanaged Helen; and I never forgot the look with which the little creature regarded her mother when she scrambled up from the floor, after the first dreadful blow I witnessed, and folded herself into my cloak—not sobbing, as children sob in general, but heaving and swelling with pain and anger. "Why should she look at Jerry?" inquired the mother, "she is my child, and she shall do what I desire. The Irish have an evil eye; I have read in books that they have; and Jerry is Irish, and

has the evil eye, that he has! and his looking so much at Helen makes her wilful, and dislike me so; I know it is that, and nothing else: it's Jerry's evil eye, and I'll have him sent away."

"He shan't go," said Helen, stoutly.

"There's the evil eye again," said Mrs. Lyndsey, "and I'll insist upon him being turned away without a character, except for an evil eye, I will, that I will, as soon as ever Mr. Lyndsey comes from town, and I am sure all Mrs. Brevet and Major Cobb say of him is quite true; and the Irish are all the same in that respect. The major says they were the plague of the army, except on the field of battle—they fought there, and always conquered—that was bocause they are so naturally fond of fighting, you know."

"Or, perhaps," I said, quietly, "they looked on the enemy with their *evil eye*."

"Very true, indeed, I should not wonder in the least if they did! I never thought of that before—it's very likely—how else should they manage, poor starved creatures, you know? and as to you, nurse, if you permit that man

to look at that child, you shall lose your situation, that you shall; and as I consider her tempers to be entirely your fault, if she is not broken of them, I'll send you away, whether or no, that I certainly will, for as Mrs. Brevet-Major Cobb says"—and then she returned to Jerry, and the evil eye, and poured forth a tide of nonsense; while, having crept round me until she got opposite the door, Helen walked sulkily out, followed by her maid, who loved the child too well to hear of being separated from her without tears.

Helen grew more rapidly in mind than in body, frequently punished, very much admired, and treated by her mother with fitful unkindness—fitful, because it went from one species of unkindness to another, according to her caprice; and all the while she was injudiciously fondled by her father. Months passed away, slowly enough with me, for I had a severe illness, followed by weakness and a depression of spirits more difficult to combat than illness itself; summer and winter succeeded each other, and at last I was prevailed on to promise to leave my house, to spend some time with Mr.

and Mrs. Middleton, at what was then an obscure sea-side village, called Little Hampton, on the Sussex coast, not far from the stately castle of Arundel. Mrs. Middleton was Mr. Lyndsey's youngest sister; she had married a gentleman of moderate fortune, but she was indeed a fortune to him. Mrs. Middleton was different in almost every respect from her brother; in person, lovely, rather than beautiful, with just enough wit and woman's playful humour to save her from insipidity; an even temper, seldom ruffled, aud quick to subside; a most affectionate and unselfish nature, and a high and fixed estimate of all things that the mind should be made up upon, so as to move steadily through life; her piety had been rightly directed by her father, who lived to see her happily married, and then died full of age and honours. She was essentially benevolent, and would have been more generally so, if her observation and action had enjoyed a more extensive field than a limited circle permits. I am not speaking of what is commonly called charity—giving food and raiment

—I mean the benevolence that is slow to impute evil intentions even to the sinner, that seeks to make allowance for those whose practice is opposed to our own, and that sympathizes after the model of our blessed Leader and Lawgiver, with those who err—hoping to save them from after error. Sometimes Mrs. Middleton would be a little severe in her *spoken* judgments; she knew nothing of the temptations of sin, or of folly, having been hedged in, during girlhood, by a watchful father's duty, and afterwards by a husband's as watchful love; she would sometimes, as I have said, speak severely, but her heart contradicted the words of her lips—so that her Heavenly Master's example was sure to guide her actions: thus, unlike worldlings, her deeds were often sweeter than her words.

Most fortunately for my friends, they married before the world had hardened the one into the flintness of old bachelorhood, or tainted the other with the desire for a 'suitable establishment,' or the resolve to be married for the sake of the position which is ceded only to a married lady.

Their means were sufficiently large to insure them comfort, and what they considered all reasonable luxuries. And if this had not been the case, they loved each other well enough to brave the worst that could come to those who, sustained by each other's affection, could endure anything—except separation; thus, it will easily be believed, they enjoyed to the fullest the implicit faith and trust in each other which the early wed alone can truly enjoy. The morning of their young lives had been spent together in an abounding happiness, which was too pure and too real to be affected by ordinary means; it was unalloyed by a grain of self-reproach, and their habits, tastes, feelings, sympathies, had grown on together; they read the same books, strengthened their minds with the same prose, enlivened and enriched it with the same poetry, and yet the difference of their natures—the strength of his temperament, and the gentleness and uplooking of hers—prevented their being insipid either to each other or to their friends; it was a beautiful union, a delicious example of the purity and holiness of wedded

life; it was a very happiness in itself to see this happy woman growing wiser in her husband's wisdom, having nothing to conceal, and looking up to him with the highest of all earthly reverences, second only to that she felt for THE highest power. No one could think of drawing a comparison between them, both were charming in their several spheres; and the more so, because af the absence of all rivalry. And yet Mrs. Lyndsey manifested a greater degree of energetic dislike to Mr. and Mrs. Middleton than she did towards any mere acquaintance; she was pettish, and factious, and fault-finding, both by nature and habit, but she hated Mrs. Middleton with a confirmed bitterness. Mrs. Lyndsey had been elevated by her marriage, and regarded those who knew her in her days of obscurity as if they were prepared to do her an injury. Sisters-in-law, I have observed, are seldom sisters-in-love; their interests almost invariably clash. Educated on different principles, frequently in a different sphere, having preconceived opinions on both material and immaterial points, strangers by birth, they are suddenly made

relations by law; and the human mind is prone to rebel against a tie which a continuance of misunderstanding hardens into a yoke; a host of petty feelings and small jealousies spring into existence, especially amongst women, against it; and formal civilities, the interchange of 'calls' and 'dinners,' denominated 'friendly,' to conceal a want of attention on the part of the giver to the comfort of the invited, lengthen either into a puppet-show ceremonial, gone through at stated times, —or terminate in a quarrel too bitter and determined to admit of being healed, except, perhaps, upon a death-bed, where a dread of the future, of the just judgments inseparable from the future, forces us to look back upon the past, and so covet a cowardly peace-making —which, in all probability, were health and human strength restored, would lapse into the old bitterness, at variance with the law of God and the best laws of life and peace. It would have been quite impossible so to 'manage' as to be friends with both Mrs. Lyndsey and Mrs. Middleton. I had know Mr. Lyndsey for some years; and I had been the playmate of

his sister; she had often entreated me to 'keep friends' with her brother, as I was the only link not severed between them. It is not possible for a lady to receive the husband and not the wife, and I found I got on with Mrs. Lyndsey as well as others, very much better than the best 'managers,' simply by saying little, but taking care that *that* little was the truth, though occasionally, perhaps, not the whole truth; this system secures both safety and self-respect.

Mrs. Lyndsey would sometimes, clinging to her one idea, grow very angry with me suddenly, but, remembering the circumscribed range of her intellect, I always felt compassion for her that God had given her so little, and answered quietly—rather in proportion to her folly than my own strength—never moving a hair's breadth from what I considered right—and then leaving her for days or weeks, as it might be, to herself, and meeting her either by chance, or when she called, as if we had only parted the day before.

When I told her I was to set off for Hampton Lodge the next morning, she put her

handkerchief to her eyes, and said, "I might have spared her the pain of saying I was going to her enemy, and suffered her to hear it from others;" and concluded by hoping I would not forget to tell *my friend* that Helen "quite inherited the Lyndsey temper."

I answered, that I made it a rule never to retail the faults of children, and that both Mr. Lyndsey and his sister had remarkably sweet tempers; then she flew out, and asked if I thought Helen inherited *her* 'temper.'

I replied, "I hope not," and finding I had dropped a stitch in my knitting, I walked to the window to take it up. This would have given time for reflection to anyone with common sense, yet she took no advantage of the pause, but continued in the same strain.

"I only hope Mrs. Middleton may hear of the handsome tea-service, urn and all, my brother Jacob left me, with the family arms on the shield." She paused, and looked towards me, but I offered no observation. "Our family arms on pure silver, none of your plated goods, genteel beggary, got-up finery, but real, downright, positive out-and-out silver,

solid as a rock, silver all through, inside and outside! I'd submit, that I would, to have her company to tea, just to mortify her with the sight, that I would!"

Still I made no reply, but rolled up my knitting, and stuck my needles into the ball. "And," she continued, "I should be glad to know if her little girl, her Florence—Florence! the heathenism of that! and the conceit, to give her an outlandish name—such a disrespect to the Marys, and Mauds, and Helens of the dear departed family,—if her Florence is better dressed than my child, or prettier, or half as clever. I do hope Helen may be a beauty, and clever, just to spite her, and rival her fine Florence! She had so many too—the indelicacy of women having so many children, just like rabbits!—yet hers are all gone but one; we'll see which child will make the greatest noise in the world. I pray, night and day, that my child may be something wonderful, something remarkable, A STAR, just to outshine hers. If it wasn't for that!—and I don't mind who knows it—but if it wasn't for *that*, I'd not care a straw how Helen

turned out. And now you are tying on your bonnet to go away, leaving me a prey to my maternal feelings; you, and your friend, Mr. Mathias, have spoken to me before now of my want of interest in my child, and, when I tell you what I have determined her to be, you tie on your bonnet."

"I perceive no maternal affection or feeling in what you have said," I replied.

"No! I shall spend every pound we have on her accomplishments, and I shall take care to instil into her mind, that if she does not distance *Miss* Florence in everything, she shall be no child of mine!"

"And you call sowing the seed of envy and hatred in your child's mind a proof of maternal affection?" I observed, looking, as I felt, highly indignant; and then when I saw no gleam of understanding in her weak and irritable countenance, nothing but an expression of dull, senseless venom, I turned away with a disgust and contempt which the most resolute silence could alone control from finding vent in words. I pinned and unpinned my shawl, and fastened and unfastened my bonnet, so as

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to give myself time to cool, and Mrs. Lyndsey time to think; but she pursued her comments upon the cruelty of my telling her, 'with my own lips,' that I was going to Hampton Lodge, and bade me 'good morning' with her handkerchief to her eyes.

The next day, about noon, as I was counting my parcels, and my maid was arranging with the post-boy as to the placing of a trunk —Little Hampton being in those times a two days' journey from town—up rode Jerry on his lean grey horse, leading the brown cob. It was evident he had left his master at the counting-house, and was returning home.

Jerry dismounted, and, assuming an air of mingled mystery and importance, said he wished to speak to me. I perceived he was encumbered with a large parcel, which seemed dropping to pieces

"The masther, ma'am, charged me to give ye these things to take to Miss Florence; just little remembrances, as he bid me to say, from Miss Helen to her cousin, and never to mind letting on a word about them—*at home*—toys, you see, to amuse the young lady."

"And who selected them?" I enquired, while looking in dismay at the heap of whips, and dogs, and horses of various kinds, which Jerry displayed with infinite parade, and knowing that one of his rambling discourses would be sure to follow.

"I did!" he exclaimed. "The masther, God bless him, gave me two guineas, to buy what I liked for the jewel that I never set eyes on, and never may—glory be to God! and sure it would be only nature in her to take to the horses; and now, may be, you'll be so good as to think of it, ma'am, here's the very moral of the brown cob, only it is spotted, and here's my own grey, barring the tail; they might make them a dale better than they do, but still the horses might keep her in mind of her uncle, and it's ill letting love go to the bad intirely among relations; they ought to love one another, not to be all as one as the animals that have no souls, and so needn't care who they meet in another world; it's a mighty foolish thing to keep giving the young ladies nothing but allyblaster dolls, as if they'd have nothing in the wide world to do but nurse

babbies all the days of their life. I like to see a lady understand the virtues and ways of a horse. My old masther—"

"I have not time for a story now, Jerry," I said, "but I will take the toys, and I am sure Mrs. Middleton will bear in mind who selected them for Florence."

"I wouldn't mind asking the masther for a holiday, and travelling to see her; and if you plase, ma'am, as I know its all known to you, don't *let on* the way I'm treated by the mistress, don't; Miss Emma, that's Mrs. Middleton, minds how much her honoured father thought of me, and how I used to carry her about when she was learning to walk, and how, if she was wanted, the cry was, 'Oh, she's with Jerry, she's always safe with Jerry;' little thinking I should ever be looked down on, by one, God forgive me, who's blood's nothing but dirty wather, and who hasn't the heart to think that any one else has a heart. I'm forced to look at my masther's own child through the kay-hole; think of the cruelty of that! through the kay-hole! and I try to strengthen my heart agin her, and keep on

never minding her, but its no use, the minute I hear her innocent tongue, it's all over with me, for I've been used to young things all my life, and never fancy the stable half so much, as when Fan, the baste, has a litter of puppies, and fine ones they are this time; and young rabbits, I like to feel them hopping over my feet, indeed I'd put up with a young rat sooner, than have nothing young about me—only don't, lady dear, don't let her know I'm in any trouble, though it's often my heart is breaking through the mistress, and that thramphing Mrs Brevet-Major Cobb—Major enagh! and me, too, that knows the cabin she was born in; but that's neither here nor there, neither meal nor malt, and I'd never go against anyone elevating themselves, if so be that they don't turn nature altogether out of their bosoms—that's what I look to; next to the Almighty, is the nature which he gave us, to love one another, specially those that are of the same blood, the same faction, you understand me; to be upright to that, sure I'd die rather than let on to anyone that a masther of mine was unhappy or uncomfortable in himself

about anything. And as to the thrifle of whips, children wear them out mighty fast. I remember, when masther was a boy, and to see him *now*, no one would ever believe he was the same fine, high spirited, beautiful young man he was before you knew him, or he went abroad, in spite of all his father could say"—

"Went to France," I said, in a tone of inquiry.

"There's more places abroad than France," observed Jerry, shrewdly, and "worse, I'm thinking; and one thing's certain, poor masther was never the same, nor like the same, after he returned. Whisht! they said he was crossed in love! and that was the reason no one thought he'd ever marry, only his father. (I've tied the skipping rope round them horses, ma'am.) His father would have disinherited him, if he'd gone on, and that made him—what you know; and now, ma'am, good-bye, and good luck to you, and the Lord send you safe back and soon, and don't miss an opportunity of putting in a good word, just to keep the love alive for the masther and the little

lady; and if you can *put in* that I never forgot 'em, and that I'm brave and hearty, and equal to the hounds, if I could get any to hunt with, and pray every night on my two bended knees, for Miss Emma that was, Mrs. Middleton that is; there now, ma'am, I see by the smile on ye'r lip, you're thinking, it's always bent they are; well, it's the bend of the horse; I'd as soon ride without stirrups as with 'em, ever since I was a dog-boy, and began my knowledge of the world by stopping the fox holes. Oh, those war happy days, when I hadn't a shoe to my foot."

All the time poor Jerry had been talking, my maid and the post-boy had been packing, and when I was seated, and the chaise ready to drive off, Jerry, with the ease of manner peculiar to his countrymen—which trenches on familiarity, but originates in genuine kindness, yet which in an English servant could not be tolerated for a moment—came up to the door, and, touching his hat in his usually respectful manner, said, "Put up the window that side, ma'am, or you'll be catching the rheumatis, all through the wind, that's always contra-ry—

"'Aest, north-aest—
Neither good for
Man nor baste.'"

On the road I had ample time to muse upon the weakness and bitterness of my unhappy neighbour, for if ever woman was unhappy—perfectly and entirely unhappy—Mrs. Lyndsey was so. She had but one month in her year, and that was November, its fogs hiding a nature leafless and sapless. It is really wonderful the power of creating misery that is delegated to a weak, bitter-minded woman. I could not desire her better educated, for education may guide, but it cannot change. I dare say this opinion is unphilosophic, yet it is no less (according to my way of thinking) true. I tried to pray for her, but could hardly frame my prayer, until I thought of Helen, and then prayer welled up from my heart, that some change might be granted, for Helen's sake.

Why did I not pray, also, for her father?

CHAPTER III.

"By thy glad youth and tranquil prime
Assured, I smile at hoary time;
For thou art doom'd in age to know
The calm that wisdom steals from woe:
The holy pride of high intent,
The glory of a life well spent.

WILSON.

HAMPTON LODGE was situate about half a mile from the village of Little Hampton, not very far, if I remember rightly, from an old church, among the trees; but it is long since I was there, and the Downs, they tell me, have been so over-built, that I should have great difficulty in recognizing the various walks

which, during a period of great mental anxiety, afforded me much and frequent delight. Time has galloped through the last fifty years at an amazing rate; and it has been no easy matter to keep pace with him. I sometimes feel, when I look back at the events of this present miraculous age, as if I had lived almost as long as the Wandering Jew, such wonderful changes have taken place around me. I do not speak of the wars and revolutions that shook earth to its very centre, but the still more extraordinary revolutions in things and people—the sweeping away of much that impeded the range of thought and the spread of information—and at the same time, the danger that those swelling floods might overthrow what they could not restore; it certainly is very, very wonderful to look back even for a little time; and all that I, an old woman, can do, is to pray that, whatever we let go, we may hold fast that which is right. Hampton Lodge was very retired in its situation, and Little Hampton a charming, quiet country village; its proximity to the sea imparting a deeper interest to its inhabitants than inland villages possess—at

least, for me. In addition to the usual dwellers in an out-of-the-way hamlet, there were one or two boat-builders, and some comfortable well-to-do householders, who were more than *suspected* of being given to smuggling. You frequently met careless, off-hand-looking fisher lads on the beach, singing snatches of Dibdin's songs, and throwing stones at the seagulls, that seemed hardly to avoid them; and a rudely constructed pier very near the mouth of the river, where it rushed into the sea, was the *tryst* of many of the village girls with their sailor-lovers. Where the most convenient bathing machines have long congregated, there then stood a blackened-looking hut, that seemed to have been built of drift wood; its door was secured by a huge hasp and pad-lock; this building contained a coffin-like tub, in which, by giving notice on a previous night to a weird sort of woman who lived in a fisherman's house close to the rockless beach, you could, on the following morning, enjoy the luxury of a warm salt-water bath; and if you did not like to make your toilet on the strand, you might be able to secure the shelter of the

'bathing house,' by application to the same woman and the payment of sixpence, that is supposing she was in good humour and at home, two circumstances not to be always reckoned on. It certainly was a primitive place in those days; the inhabitants of the village were quite natural and unsophisticated—disposed to treat visitors at the lodge with great respect, for they saw few strangers—and the curate's wife was likely to borrow your spencer, or request to see how your bonnet was trimmed, coming so lately from London; while inquiries as to how you bore the fatigue were as numerous as the families who visited the Middletons. There were old ladies, who shook their heads and gravely hinted at the wickedness of a town life—and young ones, who thought with the thoughtless bravery of youth, what signified the wickedness to them! if they could only get to 'town,' they would not care for its wickedness—they would have nothing to do with that. There was a half mad woman who wrote rhyme and called it poetry; and a sentimental young man who commenced his conversations by the inquiry, "By the bye, do

you admire Shakespere?" or, "Don't you think Milton is ray-ther heavy?" There was a bluff fox-hunting squire, all noise and 'bluster,' who tally-ho'd his daughters into dinner, and instilled early into his sons a hatred of French wines and an affection for strong drinks; who associated the idea of a university education with beer-drinking, rowing, and mad pranks on the provost—who cracked jokes upon the parson, which the parson, I am sorry to say, was not either slow or delicate in returning; and yet he spared the curate, and would send him a hare and a brace of birds frequently, simply because the curate's earnestness and piety commanded his respect. There were children—that a childless prince would have coveted to call his own—wandering from their cottage-doors into the sheltered meadows or breezy uplands—there were dames in linen caps, pinned beneath their chins, 'neatly put on,' who had never been so far from home as Arundel, and did not know that England was an island, though they heard she 'ruled the waves'—there was a schoolmaster, plump and brisk, who rattled his cane as if it had

been a drum-stick, right joyfully, and thrashed his pupils to the time and tune of 'poor Jack,' which he whistled gleefully during the operation—there was a pale, thin, shrivelled woman, whose husband had been drowned soon after their marriage—he commanded a fishing-boat, which had drifted in keel-uppermost—her grief was so full of anguish, that her neighbours considered it a mercy when her mind seemed to shred away, fragment by fragment, leaving the 'pride of the village,' as I saw her, a mere vestige of life, passing swiftly from her mother's inland cottage to the beach, daily, at the same hour, with that eager, anxious, restless gait, uttering no words, taking no notice of man, woman, or child, seeing nothing but the ocean, straining her large, dry eyes towards that, fluttering up the pier like a wounded sea-mew; she would then stand looking out—her hand shading her eyes—in sunshine or shower—in storm or calm—ever, ever looking out! an hour, or two, or three, according to her strength, until some compassionate fishwife or fisherman, knowing by her waving to and fro 'a reed shaken by the

wind,' that she could not stand much longer, led her tenderly along the blackened planks of the old pier, and told her the boat would come in next tide; and then she would flit, and falter homewards—taking no note—speaking no word. There were also stately neighbours, paying and returning visits—quiet, kind, and high-bred, good samples of the pure old English gentry—the father of a noble bearing—the mother queen-like, yet gentle and obedient to her lord—the daughters generally lovely and loving—and the sons full of college, or the stables, according to their tastes. 'The county people' never, of course, dreamt of calling on the 'bathers,' or ordinary inhabitants, unless they were known to them in some direct line; even then, there never existed much cordiality between those who 'gave dinners' and those who 'only invited their friends to tea;' they belong everywhere to separate spheres.

The calm and quiet of those days is something, even now, quite delicious to think about. I can shut my eyes and fancy myself in the low-ceiling'd parlour, with its bow window,

which looked over the grass-plot and the broad yew hedge on to the Downs beyond, girdled by the sea, not the rampant, roaring sea of a rocky coast, foaming and thundering, and dashing against the citadels of nature, but the gentle waves of Sussex, washing the beach, rolling up and running down, so as hardly to disturb the pebbles, coming to us in murmurs, in deep mysterious whispers, telling of the eternity of waters.

And within, on a carved seat, beside her work-table, sat my friend, the freshness of youth hardly faded from her lovely cheek, her child ever near her, and she, patient of the hundred questions which intelligent childhood pours into a mother's ear, replying or parrying, as it seemed best to her admirable judgment. Sometimes Mr. Middleton would come in, and then both mother and child were decked in their very brightest smiles. His presence banished every care, every thought, but of the fulness of peace and hope, and all the blessed certainties of domestic love—a harmony only to be surpassed by that everlasting harmony which true affection can all

but realize on earth. So much for my memory's picture. Nothing elevates a woman so securely, either abroad or at home, as the willing, the natural, reverence she shows her husband, conveyed in no set terms, evidenced by no prescribed form, paying no compliment, abstaining from no freedom of speech or opinion that womanly liberty permits, and yet, plain to sight and understanding, a deep *heart*-reverence, which, unless a woman can truly feel, she sins to kneel before God's altar as the bride of the present, the wife of the future—

> "Through grief and through danger,
> Through sorrow and shame!"

But Mrs. Middleton, as may be supposed from what we have said, had no trials of the heart —no trials of duty; she could not help honouring him, and she did so to her own heart's content; yet, I doubt, if any woman without large veneration (to speak phrenologically), would have been so very, very happy with Mr. Middleton; he was exceedingly particular in *small* as well as great matters; he was too well bred to find direct fault with a

visitor, though, if I failed to replace a book I had been reading in its proper position on the shelf, I could see his eye directed towards it with a restless glance, and then his sweet wife would get up and ask, "If I had done with it?" and I saw I was expected either to read on or put it by. He was learned in etiquette, and exact to a day in returning calls and answering letters; he could not endure a bit of thread on the carpet, or a chair *pictorially* out of its place—I write '*pictorially*,' because he hated chairs placed rank and file against the wall as much as I did; but there was a variety of chairs, and his good taste had allotted each a place, where it certainly produced an 'effect,' and was seen to the best advantage. "Please, my dear friend," said Mrs. Middleton to me, one morning, "please do not put that pale maple chair against those crimson curtains—Middleton says it looks like a spot, and that the Elizabethan chair has the best effect in yon corner. You will excuse my mentioning it; but we must consider you 'NOBODY,' and it made him restless the whole evening to see the chair there." Of course, I said I was

very sorry, and regretted he had not told me —which I might have known he would not have done for the world. But his particularity kept me always in a state of watchful fever. Instead of moving happily about when he was in the room, I used to worry myself thinking if I were in the right place, or if I had said or done anything in 'bad taste,' for this 'bad taste' was the domestic 'bugbear.' "Please, our own dear NOBODY," whispered little Florence to me, "do not wear those turquoise again; papa says, dark ladies should wear coral, and you have beautiful coral." It certainly was very wrong of me; but, despite my respect for, and admiration of, Mr. Middleton, it was sometimes a relief when he left the room; when he was present, I felt like a schoolgirl under the immediate eye of a very erect governess.

The children Mr. and Mrs. Middleton had lost, had been taken from them just as the bud of life was unfolding into full existence, and the one who remained was so perfect as to leave its parents no rational wish unsatisfied. Mr. Middleton's manner was not as warm or

genial as that of his wife; it was more calm and thoughtful; and when he brought a book, or came to tell us an incident, we all drew up and put ourselves to rights, pretty certain that we should be improved and interested rather than amused. He might have thought (for he always acted after thinking) that, in her young days, his 'Emma' somewhat needed such monishing—needed an infusion of reflection—thought and spoke more from impulse than is wise, however pleasant to those who listen; yet he admired her so much, appealed to her so frequently in matters of judgment, as well as in matters of taste and feeling, that it might have been the habit of his mind, and nothing premeditated. And it was pleasant, despite his peculiarities, to see them in that quiet room; it was a living, overflowing happiness to go with them among the poor, to note the total absence of all ostentatious charity—to see many humble eyes turned on them with the certainty of relief, accompanied by words and advice more valuable than gifts; to hear how the village children raised their voices and shouted when they saw Mrs. Middleton from

afar, and then sank into a sort of reverential silence, the silence of affection, as she approached; to know that the husbandman was able to pay his rent, and save something for the required comforts of the evening of his days; to hear the simple, straightforward statements of his few tenants, who were satisfied with 'the squire's opinion,' or 'the squire's decision,' let it be what it would. Mr. Middleton had established a reputation in his immediate neighbourhood for a sort of infallibility, and retained it by the invariable practice of the means by which it was obtained. You never heard him complaining of the ingratitude or improvidence of the 'lower classes.' If he met with the one, or observed the other, he would reason upon it—begin to consider that, perhaps, he expected too large a return for what he had done, or that the person had not the mental power to appreciate his exertions, and, therefore, had committed no *moral* fault; calling to mind how little the poor really have to save from, or turn it off with an allusion to a science, which, perhaps, the beautiful development of his wife's head

led him, more than any other cause, to trust in, and laughingly say, "After all, my dear, if we were to examine, I dare say, we should find that it is their phrenology that is in fault; there is some depression of that particular organ, we must not blame them for that, you know—and if it is not the phrenology, a great portion of the fault may rest with myself; I am often ungrateful to the Power to whom I owe my many blessings, and if with my knowledge and enlightenment, I am ungrateful, why should I turn away from those who know so little, and have so few opportunities of practising the higher virtues of our nature?" The neighbouring gentry, while they loved and admired my friends, considered them 'odd,' 'peculiar,' with 'extraordinary notions.' Fond as he was of field sports, Mr. Middleton, with all his particularity, did not strictly 'preserve' his game; in fact, if his hares and pheasants 'poached' on the farmers, he never objected to their being shot; and it was singular how eager the farmers were to prove that all the game they found wandering on their farms, belonged to Mr. Middleton.

I said that little Florence Middleton was so perfect, that no *reasonable* mother could wish her different from what she was; but mothers, no matter how reasonable on other matters, are sometimes unreasonable in the returns they require from their children.

Florence was two years older than her cousin Helen, but I soon perceived that her mind was hardly as advanced—certainly not so acute; they were both lovely—beautiful, in fact—but of a different order of beauty. Florence was almost a blonde, though her eyes were of a deep, thoughtful grey, and her eyelashes so dark as to assure us that her hair would become brown in time; her features were regular, her mouth (the unsatisfactory feature in Helen's face) perfection; the upper lip short and curved, the under small and full; her forehead was higher than her cousin's, but hardly as spherical, and the contour of her face so graceful that I have often pushed back her curls to enjoy the pleasure of looking at the perfect oval, while the soft, full cheeks dimpled into smiles; she was larger in proportion than Helen, and, although her limbs were models of young beauty, they were somewhat heavy.

"She will be large," said her mother, "not awkward, I hope, but large; yet her feet and hands are small—don't you think so? And she is slow in comprehending, very slow at comprehending imaginative things, though I have never perceived that she lost anything she had once gained. Whatever pain it cost me, I never suffered her, even in her nurse's arms, to do what I said should not be done; nor have I ever degraded her or myself by the chastisement of a blow; where children are trained with firmness from their birth, blows are worse than unnecessary; she is utterly and entirely incapable of an untruth, for she knows no fear, except the fear of offending, and nothing in any one offends so much as falsehood. We never doubt her; and if she meets with an accident, or does anything that is wrong, she is the first to come and tell it."

While Mrs. Middleton was speaking, Florence entered the room.

"Go, my love, into the library; I do not wish you to hear what I am saying to my friend;" and Florence went at once. She had

to cross an ante-room leading to the library, and the suite of rooms were only divided by curtains. We continued talking; and in a few minutes I saw Florence re-cross the ante-room, and heard her trotting up stairs. We continued our conversation, Mrs. Middleton expressing her thankfulness for her child's fine moral qualities, deep affections, excellent disposition and temper, but still showing that she regretted the absence of more striking manifestations of talent. "She will never make a figure in the world," she added, with a sigh.

"How often have I heard you say, that the less figure a woman made in the so-called 'world' the better?"

"Ah, you remember things so," answered my friend, blushing; "but I should not like her to be deficient—or to seem stupid—or pay the penalty of not being able to express what she feels as she feels it, and the mortification of being distanced by smaller persons."

"She is too like her father not to be above all that," I observed. "You will give her both a higher and better aim, than to waste the strength of an eagle in the flutterings of a sparrow."

"You are right," she said, after a pause; "and you see how unworthy such hopes for my child, such weakness in her mother, are of the estimation in which my husband holds me. You know how open my heart is to him; he has frequently reproved me for this inconsistency. I always consider you NOBODY, so am less pained at your seeing my weakness, than I should be at exhibiting it to any other human being. Florence has even now a calm, steadfast mind, not quick to take impressions, certainly, but strong to retain them."

"Old Jerry," I observed, "would tell you your chief wish ought to be 'that God'—(I quote his very peculiar phraseology)—'would *mark* her to grace.'"

"Poor Jerry is right. There are for us all diversities of gifts; but the best gift for a woman is ——"

"'That God would mark her to grace?'" I said, inquiringly.

"We may smile," she replied; "we may smile at the curious structure of the sentence, but Jerry, poor old, faithful Jerry, is right—to be 'marked' to grace, to be chosen of the

Lord for His high, His holy, His gracious purposes, is surely the most glorious distinction that can be bestowed upon a human being —to live on in the humble but earnest working out of His commands, of His love, of His charity, is, indeed, a high privilege. Florence will do *that;* and, as a Christian parent, I ought not to wish for more; but there are many and strange stirrings in a mother's bosom—it is foolish, and worse than foolish—I sometimes fancy *her* future; and when I know I have wrought up my feelings into the high-souled prayer, which both her earthly and her heavenly Father would approve, I find myself fancying how a coronet would become her brow, or my ears tingle at the idea of her announcement among the nobility of the HEREAFTER."

"That large veneration of yours," I said laughing; "Mr. Middleton would vouch for its leading you astray."

"No, no, *that* keeps people right. It is my vanity, and my——that bump at the back with a long name. I never had those foolish dreams for myself when I was a girl, and it

seems so absurd I should have them for her —they are, however, but passing—they enter and flit away, and, until this moment, were known only to my husband—my better self."

"And your own poor NOBODY?"

"Even so. What a blessed thing it is to know two human beings from whom you have no concealment, whom you feel assured, cannot think evil of you, because of the small weaknesses of human nature—the every hour nothings, which lose their importance when communicated, and become dangerous only when admitted to secret conference with our secret selves,—whose philosophy has been taught by Christianity, and who know that foolish fancies, whatever they are born of, do not impede the healthful beatings of our hearts."

I loved her all the more for the simple and pnre transparency of her nature. To see her ruffled, as a dove ruffles its feathers for the greater protection and comfort of its young, was quite new to me; and I could not but admire the delicate forbearance she evinced to question me, or even express the least desire to learn anything of Mrs. Lyndsey, or her feel-

ings. She was incapable of 'hinting at,' or 'fishing' for, information. Her brother's wife was distasteful to her, and she avoided any allusion to her; once only she said, "Do not imagine that I do not love my brother or his child, because I do not speak to them: except by sending those toys to Florence, my brother has not recognized my existence since our last meeting, and I could not endure to hear any thing of him or his that would not communicate pleasure. Time will bring things round, and make things plain which are now mysterious, ; and my heart is open to him and his child, whenever he permits it to be so." All this conversation passed, and much more, after Florence left the library, and in something more than an hour we went upstairs to Mrs. Middleton's dressing-room; there sat the subject of our thoughts, trying to make out a story in a new book.

"Why are you here?" asked her mamma. The child turned her large eyes, bright with truth and honour, to her mother's face. "Why are you here, my dear?" repeated Mrs. Middleton; "I told you to go into the library,

where your playthings were, yet now I find you here."

"I knew," answered Florence, "that you sent me out of the drawing-room because you wished me not to hear what you were saying; but as I could hear it quite as well in the library as in the drawing-room, I came up here."

Mrs. Middleton bowed her face over the child to hide one of the most delicious emotions she had ever felt. "My good, honourable child, my own dear, dear Florence," she said, 'May this feeling increase in all things, I may have to explain to you the meaning of the *word* 'honour' hereafter, but I shall have no trouble to teach you its principle." She shed tears of joy when repeating this little anecdote to her husband in the evening, and he kissed them away in his own solemnly affectionate manner. (They did not mind the NOBODY.)

I think this little circumstance, trifling as it may seem to many, strengthened my friend's faith in her child, so as to increase, if possible, the happiness she enjoyed; Florence had not only evinced a nice sense of honour, but she

had proved her power of self-control. Jerry's stud of horses had set her thinking how much she should like a rocking-horse, and one had been placed that very morning in the library ; but even *that* she had left, that she might not hear our conversation. The more numerous my facilities of observing Florence became, the more I was convinced that she would ripen into a character of great value ; her mind was far more active than her father believed it to be, but it was thoughtful rather than demonstrative. Her dog and her pony became her constant companions ; she would seek and gather shells on the sea-shore, group flowers, and learn their names and properties. Children who live in an inland district have only half the opportunities of acquiring the knowledge and poetry of nature enjoyed by those who live at the sea-side. Florence could suit her mood by rambling either in the plantations or on the beach, on the wide outspread downs—so blithe and pleasant—such a world of sunshine !—along the paths which skirted hedge-rows, enamelled by the freshest, sweetest flowers—she would linger by the little gardens, inhaling

the perfume of flowers, only found in perfection when cultivated by the cottager—and the dame, never failed to offer a posey to 'pretty Miss,'—which Florence was often too shy to accept. Sometimes she would ask me to take her to the churchyard, which was shielded from the cold winds by three matchless yew trees—beneath whose shadows the earth was covered with the same cold coarse grey moss that encrusted the grand old church, nothing green sprang from its walls—it seemed as though green were all too young a colour, for its reverend age. There never was a seaside churchyard, without numbers of nameless graves—and here were many—set close together all in a row—the same height and length—poor shipwrecked mariners—one great mound there was—eleven bodies beneath a single mound; but these were not strangers, and so a tombstone rudely carved with a few masonic emblems, told how they all perished—having put out "on the boiling waves"—to save a ship—when all went down together—what a record of desolation!—the villagers' graves were generally marked by wooden crosses, or crossed over with willow wands. Florence

always paused beside three little graves, where wild violets and primroses sheltered beneath the waving grass. The legend ran—that three little girls—sisters—had died of fever, and were buried there. It was a pretty sheltered, but sunny nook—and after church on Sundays, there was generally a knot of the best children of the school, clustering round those pretty graves, and looking down on them with silent were, and yet with sympathy; but after all, the old—rough-handed, weather beaten, seamen—

"Too old for work—but not too old for prayer,"—

are the most interesting features in our sea-side church scenery—we used to find them seated on the flat tombstones—or lingering about the stile, as if they liked to know their future dwelling.

In her rambles, Florence was generally accompanied by one or other of her parents, teaching—when she had no idea she was learning, and mingling thought and mirth together in such sweet communion that she could not tell which she loved best. Nothing could contrast more strongly than the different educations of the two cousins.

CHAPTER IV.

"Those earthly hopes that to the last endure,
Those fears, that hopes superior fail to cure,
At best a sad submission to the doom,
Which, turning from the danger, lets it come."

CRABBE.

I REMAINED six months at Hampton Lodge, my mind soothed, and my spirits revived, by the love and harmony of its inmates; and when I returned home, the first news I heard was, that something was going very wrong at the Lyndseys. This I was told in answer to my usual inquiries after my neighbours; and, the following morning, when Martha Ryland, the mantua-maker, came to make the sundry alterations in my wardrobe, which so long a country residence rendered necessary, she in-

formed me——But Miss Ryland, her home, and its inmates, deserve an introduction—an introduction of a rather minute kind; for Mary, Martha's sister, had much to do with the formation of Helen Lyndsey's taste, not for finery, but for poetry. Martha was a slight, bent, delicate-looking young woman, of about twenty, pale and placid, speaking slowly in a clear, low-toned voice, with the power of adapting fashions to the wearer that might have been envied by the most successful *modistes* of the present day; she had really a genius for her calling, and an undeniable stock of patience, a patience which neither scolding or 'nagging,' or discontent, or violence, could overthrow; tears would gather in her eyes, for her feelings were acute when ladies exercised their caprice upon her; but nothing could provoke her to utter an impatient word, or make an impatient gesture. Sometimes she went out to work by the day, and I have wondered how, hour after hour, her meek head would bend over her task, and her fingers ply their allotted flight unceasingly; yet, when spoken to, she answered pleasantly, and her smile

was as gentle as a moonbeam, and as sad! it was the saddest thing I ever saw, to be considered a smile. When she knew her employer sufficiently, she would venture on a few words, but she always needed encouragement, and avoided as much as possible talking of her past life or circumstances. And what a world of enduring love and heroism dwelt within the two rooms she called her own! One was a sort of village show-room; a deal table, painted red, half covered by a yellowish-green baize, displayed sundry patterns, and one or two stands, upon which caps flourished, not the tight-headed caps of modern days, but those wonderful things standing out like a radiance round the head, and bristling with flowers and colours; a hard, high-backed sofa, two chairs, a leaning glass, a corner cupboard, and a work-box, so handsome as to belong altogether to another sphere, constituted the furniture; there were no green and blue shepherdesses on the chimney, broken or entire, only a few rare shells. A canary bird, blind from age, hung in the window, and beneath, on the broad ledge, were a few plants; a myrtle, two sickly-looking

geraniums, running into green, sappy, feeble wood, and some very fine double primroses. On the high-backed, hard sofa, Martha's sister, Mary, generally reclined, from about eight in the morning until midnight, always in the same position, for she had lost the use of her limbs. And yet Mary was as necessary to Martha, as Martha was to Mary: her face was round and cheerful, and her voice had the ringing sound of happiness in its tone. Mary was older and better educated than Martha, but everyone considered her the youngest, perhaps because of her helplessness; yet she was wonderfully useful to her sister, she ran all the 'breadths,' hemmed the 'tails, and as to 'tucks!' her 'tucks' were the most imaginative 'tucks' that can be conceived, they were so minute and delicate. She had an astonishing taste for millinery; her memory was retentive; she not only remembered people's orders and addresses, but their tastes and fancies, and so saved her sister a deal of anxiety and care, for she knew that Mary remembered everything; and she had also the art of talking her sister's crossest cus-

tomers into good humour. Martha was sadly untidy, but Mary, notwithstanding her helplessness, managed to keep the sitting-room in the most perfect order; with the aid of her crutch she picked up threads and 'cuttings," and put the faded table-cover straight, if Martha had left it ever so crooked. Nor was it only on business and passing events that Mary's memory was exercised. She knew, and could repeat, at least a score of ballads, and sing them too; and I have often seen a cluster of children group round the half-open window, which, though curtained, did not prevent her sweet voice from being heard and appreciated by the little listeners. Although this room was a room of intense labour—labour born of privation, a yet deeper distress was enclosed—I had almost written *entombed*—within the other chamber. On a clean bed lay the mother of these two girls, a living sorrow, yet cherished in their affections beyond all telling; she was their mother, utterly helpless, without the power of raising a cup of water to her own lips, and as feeble in mind as in body, recognising her children at long intervals, not

by a look, or a word, or a smile, but by the shedding of tears. No one ever saw this afflicted woman in a soiled cap, or with a crumpled riband folded round her head, or heard her voice, or found her asleep; though her eyes emitted no ray of intelligence, they would turn towards the direction from which Mary's voice proceeded with something like interest in her song. And there she continued, the same stricken, lonely creature, watched and tended by those daughters whose industry and singleness of purpose had won for them so true a feeling of respect in the neighbourhood, that even 'Mrs. Brevet-Major' treated them, as she herself would have said, with 'distinction.' It was almost a realized union between the quick and the dead, the union between this mother and her children! And in the interest excited by the industry and patience of the Misses Ryland, the good people of Hampstead almost forgot the rumours which attended their first appearance amongst them, when their mother was able to move about, though even then she never spoke to a stranger, and avoided even the society of her own daughter.

Enough of them for the present. I inquired when Martha Ryland had seen Mrs. Lyndsey, aad she answered, "Not for some time. Miss Helen," she added, "came in as usual to hear her sister sing old ballads, but she had not seen Mrs. Lyndsey for more than a month; and Mr. Lyndsey went so early into the City, and returned so late, that people wondered he was not afraid to ride the lonely road from town by himself, or with only Jerry; the tea-garden patrol was a great protection a few seasons ago, but that had been done away with, though the road was still dangerous from highwaymen."

I was very anxious to learn if the report my maid had mentioned had a wide circulation; yet my objection to asking questions was so great, that I hardly knew how to frame the inquiry, and began to consider whether I had not better stifle my curiosity altogether, when Miss Jane Saunders entered. Miss Jane had a fancy for spreading sea-weed on white paper, sticking it out into weeping willows, and birch trees, and poplars, and the like, and when they were arranged, some up, some down, in what

I used to think a very unnatural manner, Miss Jane (who was said to have the taste of the family) used to have them framed, and hung as pendants to the black 'cuttings out' of herself and her sisters—poor things! who, very lean and long, looked like cameleopards in profile. I had promised to get her some specimens while in Sussex, and, I dare say, her early visit was prompted by a desire to see if I had kept my word—perhaps with a kindly wish or curiosity as to the state of my health, and an anxiety to be the first to

"Hear or tell some new thing."

The Saunderses, one at a time, and when there was no scandal in the case, were very pleasant women, particularly to me, to whom talking in the ordinary way was always a trouble; but when they all talked together, on different subjects, it was too much, and afterwards I was thankful to think that Miss Jane was the only one who called that morning, for there is something painful in hearing private trials made the subject of public talk. Misfortunes are in themselves so sacred, that,

whether they concern our friends or enemies, they should be whispered, not shouted, to the world. Miss Jane was not of this opinion. She began immediately by the enquiry, "Had I heard the dreadful report about the house of Lyndsey and Co.?" She said this in such a tone of loud and vulgar exultation, that I involuntarily looked at the dressmaker, as a sign to Miss Jane to be more cautious. This, however, had no effect whatever. "Oh!" she exclaimed, "I understand; Miss Martha Ryland has told you, I suppose?"

"No, ma'am I have not," said the dressmaker; "I, myself suffered so much from reports some years ago, that I do not like to repeat what may not be true; at least," she added, "I had no means of ascertaining whether it was true or false."

"Oh, very right, and very prudent, and very necessary in your position; but I *know* what I say—and a very shocking thing it is—very mournful and sad to think of; though, if we had known the ins and outs of it, it might have been expected, long ago. Not only is the house unable to meet its creditors, but there is strong suspicion of forgery."

"Oh, Miss Jane, not as regards Mr. Lyndsey," said Martha Ryland.

"Well, I declare!" muttered Miss Saunders; "some people hardly know their proper places in society."

Martha coloured, and bent over her work.

"The Lyndseys were very kind to Miss Ryland," I said.

"Gave her work, and paid for it, I suppose," was the reply; and then she continued, with the voice and manner of a person who would add vinegar to green gooseberries, "I repeat there are strong suspicions of forgery—somewhere. I do not say where, but Lyndsey and Co. are suspected of forgery; one partner is all the same as another."

"No," I replied indignantly, "not so. I have known Mr. Lyndsey all my life, and I am certain he is utterly incapable of approaching such dishonour; he *could not* commit a crime—it is impossible!"

"Lord bless me!" she said, "Lord bless me, who would have thought to see you so moved on the subject, you who are so quiet that one never minds saying anything before

you—I am sure the Cobbs believe it. My sister Selina has never ceased watching the road from breakfast till dinner with a telescope, and neither the Major, nor Mrs. Brevet Major Cobb, have passed near the Lyndsey's house, or even looked at it, for more than a week. All the tradespeople have sent in their bills; the apothecary told me *he* should call no more. And these two Sundays there has not been a creature in the Lyndsey pew; as my sister Selina says, that's a shame, for it's when people are in trouble they ought to pray most to God."

"And not when they enjoy his blessings?"

"Now that is so much like you; but still they ought to go to church"

"And have all their acquaintances deserted them?" I enquired, without noticing her observation.

"Indeed I think so; we pity Mrs. Lyndsey very much, and if anybody called, we would; but we are too humble to take the lead in such a place as this, where everybody knows everybody. Mr. Lyndsey has not been home for some days; and what provokes all Hampstead

is, the brazenness of that Irishman, exercising the brown cob on the Heath every day at the usual hour, just as if nothing had happened. I met him yesterday, and could not help saying that he seemed to have plenty of time on his hands now. And he answered so impertinently, that, 'Whatever he had on his hands, he knew how to make a good use of.' He was always an exceedingly disagreeable person."

I arose and looked out of the window, first over the common, and then up at the light fleecy clouds that were folding and unfolding, now floating away and dispersing in light vapours, only to congregate again more densely than before.

"I hope," I said, after a protracted investigation of the state of the atmosphere. "I hope it will not rain to-day."

"Why, you are not going out? I met your boy, ('the boy' of those days was 'the page' of the present,) I met him, and he said he was going to the milliner's to order some bonnets wanted to be tried on."

"But," I replied, taking up what *had been*

my best, although my sea-side residence had converted it into my worst, "*this hat is surely good enough to visit the Lyndseys in?*"

I do not know whether my look or my words disconcerted Miss Jane, but it was some time before she spoke; when she did, she observed,—

"And you will call! after staying with his sister, and after all the ill-natured things Mrs. Lyndsey said of you while you were away, which, of course, I am not going to repeat." She paused, and looked at me, expecting I would ask her to do so, but I only shifted the strings of my bonnet. She added, in a perplexed and disconcerted tone, "I was certain you would never enter the house again."

"Mrs. Lyndsey is not a white pebble upon the heath—I mean she is not the one to avoid scandal or gossipping, and has given, it would seem, cause for both; but she is in trouble."

"But, think of what people will say even of you, who are NOBODY."

"That is the reason why I go."

"No one goes near them."

"Another reason why I, who have known the family so long, should not forsake them."

"The Cobbs and the Veseys, the Langdales and the Bruces, will think it strange."

"I am not accountable to them for my actions."

"Really," continued Miss Jane, in a tone of extreme vexation, "there is no use in telling you anything; you act as if you did not believe one."

"Nor do I."

Miss Jane drove the pin more deeply into the foldings of her shawl, and looked daggers.

"I disbelieve the statement; I have no reason to doubt you. You repeat what you hear; not having an active imagination, you repeat it correctly. The person to whom you tell it has a very active mind and tongue, and she repeats it with additions; and so it goes on till the grain of sand grows into a bushel."

"But, my dear lady, there can be no doubt, no question, as to his difficulties—house stopped—bills dishonoured—Mr. Lyndsey away: the butcher would not give them credit for a leg of mutton, nor the baker for a loaf."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Saunders," said

the dressmaker; "the butcher went there for orders to-day, and told me he was very sorry for the temper he had shown when Mr. Lyndsey's bill was dishonoured. 'He was a good customer to me for twelve years,' said Mr. Candy, 'and I was worse than a brute to forget it.'"

"Some people have great luck," observed Miss Jane; "I always thought Candy looked like a fool."

"Miss Jane," I said, "one word will do as well as twenty; saves time and breath, both of which we ought to take care of; time is not our own, and breath we shall want hereafter. The misfortunes of the Lyndseys I can only regret, but Mr. Lyndsey's character I will defend until I find it unworthy; I will not take an evil report of any old friend upon trust. I must know immediately the truth."

"Good gracious me!" exclaimed Miss Jane, in evident alarm; "you are surely not going to inquire at the house—not going to repeat what I have said, and get me into trouble?"

I could not help thinking how little she thought of the trouble in which she placed

others by random talking, but made no observation.

"I know," she continued, "you will not do that; every one trusts you, and nobody cautions you, and you never get any one into trouble. I would not have spoken as I have done, only you are so safe."

I gave Miss Jane the sea-weeds, and we parted. She had not opened to me a fresh page in the book of life; it was an every-day story told over again—making disasters worse, and turning away from falling houses; but it is a poor, common-place, paltry thing, and makes us ill at ease with our fellow-creatures. I longed to see or hear some good of human nature, after such a whirlwind of dizzy scandal, which, from its frequency, is not considered as vile as it deserves to be.

Miss Jane waited for me without, and perceiving what I thought, or rather feeling that we did not think alike, she began saying that Mrs. Lyndsey was always a wilful, mindless, foolish woman, and Mr. Lyndsey an inactive, indolent man, fond of low company, being with his groom and his horses rather than with

gentlemen; but it struck me how very odd it was that Miss Jane Saunders should never have noted so much before! Another ugly page, I thought, turned over; which rendered me so uncomfortable in her society, that I drew my veil over my face, and wished her a most determined good morning.

That night, after a day of painful experiences, I had a dream—which I will relate here, rather than at the end of the next chapter, where I shall have something else to say.

I heard a continuous sort of chatter—the peculiar tender tone, in which insincere people pay compliments, fearful to speak out, lest their words should be heard by others than their victim, and registered; and I looked, and saw a flock of tattered jays and pies, and unclean birds fluttering round a ladder; and on this ladder was a man, mounting vigorously upwards; the ladder seemed to stand up of itself, against nothing, and I observed that the higher he got, the more the ladder trembled—which he perceived not, for it did not stay his progress; but, with eyes fixed upon a quantity of trumpery baubles that were piled on

the topmost steps, he went jauntily up, over two or three bars at a time, running a risk of breaking his neck, and for what?—the higher he got, the louder became the voices of the birds, and I could hear them complimenting him more and more on his beauty and bravery, talent and power, urging him on, and for what? The youth was mightily delighted, and tossed his head, as if in triumph. It was curious to hear the kite and the hawk discoursing more fluently than parrots, and to see the bare-necked vulture bending his bald head, and schooling his fierce insulting eyes into servility—while he praised and flattered and encouraged the hair-brained youth on his course; the higher the youth climbed, the more the ladder shook to and fro—and at last I looked down to see how it was supported—and to my horror I perceived that it was based upon a sand-heap—I looked up, and saw the foolish young man, grasping at the baubles; the ladder reeled—I shrieked out, and as I did so, the ladder fell with a great crash, and the birds which had fluttered round—flattering the climber, and encourage-

ing him in his idle course, when they saw him helpless, and shelterless, grovelling in the sand, pounced upon him—and with a loud insulting, reproaching noise, tore him to pieces—Alas! alas!—that this dream should be one of the realities of life!

CHAPTER V.

"Thou hadst no anxious hopes for me
In the winning years of infancy,
No joy in my upgrowing;
And when from the world's beaten way
I turned 'mid rugged paths astray,
No fears where I was going."

SOUTHEY.

IF you enter the house where death has been, the black dresses and downcast eyes of the servants tell at once the cause of the hush and silence which the passing of the dark angel's wing has produced. You speak in a low tone, and tread softly, as if fearful of disturbing that which can wake no more. It is likely there is a cloth over the cage of the singing-bird, and that the blinds are all drawn

down. The child that used to spring like an arrow to meet you, steals to your side, and looks up into your face with such an expression of meek misery, that you know her heart is full, and that the moment you speak her eyes will overflow. When you turn the lock of the well-known sitting-room, the full gush of memory overpowers all other sensations; the snuff-box or spectacles are in their usual places on the little round table, by the side of the old arm-chair; if the friend you have lost was young, or in the full summer of life, the flower vase she delighted to fill, is empty, and the music-books are piled with as much order as if no one had ever given voice to their pages; the favourite dog rises from the hearth, and gazes at the door, watching to see who next will enter, hoping still that *she* may come who never came but in kindness. The house of mourning, though calm and desolate, has been set in melancholy order; but the house where the conflict between past and present is 'afoot' tells a different and more painful story. When the grave is closed, though there is no more joy, there is no more extension of sorrow, and

the uplooking to immortality elevates above the world; but in these earthly troubles, where the worst is yet to come, and the broken spirit and crushed heart know not what the morrow may bring, and suspicions of wrong float like a black flag above the portal, while the sufferers either shrink away from human sight and sympathy, or, in the fever of assumed strength, dare the world to say and do its worst; or, having faith in the purity of their intentions, however inefficient their power to work such intentions out, bend to the storm, only to be broken by its violence; still, no matter how the conflict between pecuniary difficulties and a harsh judging world is carried on, the scene of the combat is always a scene of disorder and wretchedness; the over-seeing mind is disturbed, filled with other thoughts and anxieties than belong to the regulating of a household, or the minutiæ of domestic comforts; while the servants, with rare exceptions, judge even more harshly than those without the walls.

The relation existing between master and servant in England, is of a less confiding, less

endearing nature, than in any other part of the world; the master commands and pays for labour, the servant obeys and takes wages —that is all; the master is too proud to receive sympathy with service, and the servant knows that he never can be more than 'a low fellow' in his employer's estimation. In large establishments, the master and mistress recognize only their upper servants; they give pay, but not even protection to the 'under' ones. And in all the small domestic homes of England, the principle is still the same; children are instructed to keep servants at a distance, and until a higher moral tone is infused into the education of their attendants the precaution is necessary, though its being so is one of the blots on our social system. Upon the first approach of sorrow or changed circumstances, 'the hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling,' and then people cry out at the ingratitude of servants, without remembering they had given them nothing to be grateful for. The mere fulfilment of a contract calls for no gratitude; while an interchange of the small attentions and kindnesses of life never

diminishes the respect which is necessary for the preservation of distinctive ranks; on the contrary, they may be thus made to cling more closely together, the servant being often more proud of his master than the master is of himself. It was evident to me, when the knock I gave at Mr. Lyndsey's door echoed so mournfully, that the parlours were unoccupied; the garden in front of the house, when I last saw it, was smiling in all the gaiety of blooming annuals; now all things were trailing and ragged; the white curtains, which Mrs. Lyndsey used to fuss and torment herself and others so much about, covered with dust, hung loosely from the cornice; a snail had fixed itself upon the division where the nearest window opened, and the steps on which I stood were green at either side. I knocked again, and, at last, one of the doors of the underground offices banged, and I heard the heavy, measured tread of a domestic, not in too much haste to obey the summons; presently the cook's face was pressed against the glass of the side-lights to ascertain who I was; the chain was unhooked, and the bolts with-

drawn, and I stood in the hall, to receive information that she did not know whether Mrs. Lyndsey was in or not ; the footman had left that morning, and if they expected her to open the door, she must do the same : "Not," added the woman, with an insulting sneer, "not that there's many call now, only it's not my business." She threw open the door of the breakfast-room, and shouted from the hall twice, "Rachel;" then one of the doors upstairs opened, and, after a brief whisper between the two servants, the nurse, always a well-behaved young woman, entered. Rachel had received no kindness from her mistress, but she was devotedly attached to Helen, who had literally taken the place of her own child, whom she had lost at its birth. She turned away to hide her tears when she saw me, and, in answer to my inquiries, said her mistress was very unwell ; she saw no one, but she would tell her I was below.

I had ample time to observe the neglect of that well-known room ; the looking-glass was covered with dust, the furniture displaced, and the carpet unswept. A broken pane in

the window admitted a strong current of air, and the fire-irons were dotted with rust. I longed to set it in order, and make it look as it used to do, and walked backwards and forwards, examining one picture and then another. At either side of the carved looking-glass hung the portraits of Mr. Lyndsey's father and mother. It must have been pure imagination, but I fancied the expression of each countenance changed, they seemed to me so full of melancholy; and the old lady, I remember, had such a happy, placid face, and such a calm smile; but now the picture frowned from the canvas on all around, while the old gentleman had a keen, sharp look of inquiry, as if he said, "What does all this mean?" Then I began to torment myself as to how Mrs. Lyndsey would receive my visit, whether she might not altogether misunderstand my motive, and behave rudely or coldly; nevertheless, I felt I was doing right. At length the nurse returned: she apologised for keeping me waiting so long,—said she 'could not help it—her mistress had not been well—her spirits were flurried, though she would not let any

one say so. Would I walk up to the drawing-room? she and Miss Helen would be there to reeeive me.'

I was much surprised at Mrs. Lyndsey's receiving morning visitors in the drawing-room, for that stately apartment was generally canvassed up, put into brown holland pinafores, like a great baby school-boy, and only displayed at Christmas and on company days; but, before I could draw an inference of any kind, Rachel ushered me in, and there, on the blue chintz sofa, sat Mrs. Lyndsey, dressed as ladies then dressed to receive a dinner-party, in a low yellow satin, with a boxful of ornaments spread over her withered throat, and glaring on her stomacher in the daylight. The fire was just lighted, and the wood was hissing and sparkling, unwilling to ignite, while the covers hastily torn off the chairs, were peeping from beneath the sofa cushions. Little Helen, decked in the very extreme of childish finery, made a spring to meet me with all her natural impetuosity; but her mother placed her hand upon her shoulder with a grasp that made the child quiver. She then arose in the most

stately manner, advanced slowly, and with much pomp, hoped 'I had received benefit from the change of air, and that I left all my *friends* well'—a marked emphasis on the word '*friends.*' With great show of ceremony she begged me to be seated, and then burst into a fit of talking, while her fingers twitched convulsively at the ends of a blazing yellow mode scarf, and every pause showed a rising and swelling movement of the throat, that was evidence of the agitation of her feelings. Instead of keeping, in her usual way, to one idea, she rushed into a multitude of events and pleasures, chattered of the beauty of the royal family, of the almost forgotten Irish rebellion, and Vauxhall, of Mrs. Siddons and the French fashions, talking in an insane, feverish manner, yet, like all great talkers, saying nothing, until my brain positively reeled under the infliction, and I asked myself the question, "Is she mad?" When I looked at her, I was dazzled by the brightness of her eyes; I could see the pulsation of the rigid veins in her temple, while two vivid crimson blotches burned on either cheek. Sometimes she compressed her lips violently,

and when they opened again they seemed drawn apart by an effort. I sought her eyes, but they would not meet mine. I sat before her in an agony of pity, which I dared not express. I saw she could not bear it. I longed to comfort her. I was prepared to hear her sorrows, and listen to her complaints, but she met me with such an air of defiance that I was struck dumb.

Helen trembled by her mother's side, her deep wandering and wondering eyes straying round the frigid room, now gazing into mine, and then glancing for a moment at her mother's face. Suddenly the poor actress paused, and, apparently worn out by the exertion, asked me what my news was, people only went and came to hear and tell news—Helen might leave the room, she had been looked at—she supposed that was enough—all I wanted, of course, was to compare her and Florence. She did not think *her* child could lose by the comparison—Helen moved away, and then, impelled by a sudden emotion, ran and flung herself into my arms.

"Dear me!" exclaimed her mother, quite

annoyed—"dear me, how very vulgar all that sort of thing is; I should expect that from a child brought up in an obscure sea-side country village, but not from you; there, your face is as red as beet-root. Go! but come back, do, miss, you were forgetting your curtsey."

The child, in those few months, had changed as much as the mother; she seemed half a dozen years older than when I last saw her; such a world of premature intelligence had crept into her face, rendering every feature, and the movement of every feature, full of expression; there seemed so little of a child in the meaning glance and the penetrating look. After she left the room there was a silence, Mrs. Lyndsey clicking her rings round her withered fingers, and looking down and adjusting her finery. I rose to wish her good-morning, seeing how determined she was to avoid the subject that filled my mind, and thinking I should not be able to say a few words at parting to tell *why* I called; but she insisted upon my resuming my seat. She had exhausted every topic of what she imagined to be fashionable conversation, and therefore was

obliged to run the same round again; still she could not rattle through even their limited range as she had previously done; she paused from sheer exhaustion. The convulsive movement in her throat, and the twitching of her fingers, increased every moment, and at last she burst into hysterics. I would have rung the bell, but she prevented me: "No," she said, "it will go off, it will be sure to go off; it's only from having—from having eaten *lobster last night, without vinegar!*" I pulled up the blind, intending to open the window; but even the pale sunlight of winter distressed her.

"No, no," she exclaimed, "shut it down, the sun and the dust spoil the furniture; and, as I expect to see a good deal of company, I like things to keep fresh; that will do."

I am sure my looks betrayed that I was sore troubled; her want of truth was vexatious, and I became forgetful that strength was not given her to walk the straight path, or understand what a friend was. Surely we should judge all persons, not by ourselves or others, but by their own powers. She was a

feeble, foolish woman, increasing her suffering by those unworthy means which could not have been practised by a worthy mind.

I inquired for Mr. Lyndsey.

"Oh, he is well enough, I dare say—hunting, or fishing, or hiding, or something of the kind," was her convulsive reply, while she dared not look me in the face. "Mr. Lyndsey was an old bachelor when he married me, and so I was never able to mould him in any way—that you must know, for we never kept any secrets from you."

"And did you ever learn that I abused that confidence?" I inquired, sitting down beside her—the wish to serve, at least to sympathize with her, still lingered in my mind.

"No, indeed, you never did—I can say that for you. You have all the secrets on the Heath in your keeping, yet no one ever knows anything from you."

"It was the belief that you so thought," I replied, "which brought me here this morning. I hoped to have been of some comfort to you, or perhaps useful, and I am sorry to

see that you have mistaken a visit, whose object required this brief explanation to account for its informality. I only returned last night."

She then commenced speaking with such rapidity, that I could not keep pace with her words, or set her right.

"And, so, they heard it there. At Hampton Lodge they talked of Mr. Lyndsey's mistakes, and Mr. Lyndsey's misfortunes, for *I* have made no mistakes; *I* have made no misfortunes; I am the same as ever; I have not speculated. *My* house, (this house, its lease for twenty-seven years was bought with my money,) is the same as ever; my child is the same as ever; and if you were like any one else, you would write, and say so, to the Middletons—tell how you saw me, and found me quite composed, sitting with my child, all arranged, and dressed, and not ashamed to be seen; but in high spirits—yes," she added with a frightful hysteric laugh, "in very high spirits; and you would tell it to the Cobbs, and the Saunderses, and the Bayless, and all those horrid Heath people, who have behaved

so shamefully to me. But you won't—you are so careful, and so silent—I know you won't. If you were anyone else, I would say, you came here to spy; but you do not—you see all, and say nothing. There was no use in my dressing for *you*—*you* look at me with your large calm eyes, nothing feeling—nothing! You have no desire to write and astonish those vile Middletons with an account of how I am, and how I look. Look at me!" she exclaimed, rising fiercely, and standing erect before the pier-glass, "Look at me!—do *I* look like the wife of a dishonoured man? They used—those who loved me—used to say I had the presence of a Lady Mayoress—tell the Cobbs that! but you will not! Oh, no—you are a *safe* person, one who never talks or tells. What if Mr. Lyndsey fails?—I had no hand in it—what have I to do with business? I never mixed myself up with his business. Why should I? Oh, if I had the making of the laws, women should be independent of their husbands! Tell the mild, meek Mrs. Middleton *that*. I hate pattern women, and I hate her! Oh, that I had a friend to blaze my

courage to the world—to talk of my resolution, and my calmness!"

She was almost insane because I would not promise to repeat all I heard, and continued to taunt me with my safety and silence. Here was a state of mind for a woman whose husband was in concealment from his creditors; and whose very life, if there was truth in report, might at that moment be forfeited, whose name was surely threatened by the mercantile dishonour of one who cannot pay that he oweth, who had sunk in a few months from, at all events, *nominal* wealth, with its appurtenances, to positive poverty. Yet here was his wife—she who ought to have been his *friend*, in its highest and purest sense—here she was, only intent upon sending abroad, the first opportunity she had, a report of her dress and composure, and the freedom of her mind from all trouble and anxiety; not seeing how she was injuring herself. It was a novel and degrading picture, and one I felt ashamed to look upon. I said something about the law, or the love, or the duty of a husband and wife, and I hoped I should soon have cause to see her

really in good spirits; and that the falling away of mere worldly acquaintances was nothing worth; and, at this point, she stopped me, by saying, "But we had no other—we never had what you would call intimate friends—people who come in to dine with you in morning dress, or stay tea without invitation, and put their feet on the fender, and ring the bell of themselves. I never allow Mr. Lyndsey to have friends of *that* kind,—*servant maids and married men should have no followers.* And as to these troubles, I am very sorry for them, of course; and I said to Mr. Lyndsey, at the very first, 'My love,' I said, 'you have got into them somehow, and you must get out again somehow, but it would be very unjust were I to be affected by them; and it is a very shameful thing that a woman like me, who sits at home, *doing no harm*, should be treated as I have been. I had such a pretty little fortune; and the worst is—those Middletons! I had set my heart upon Helen's cutting out Florence, Helen grows plain—her skin is not half so clear as it used to be; and I know very well that Mrs. Middleton will triumph, unless you could

manage to tell her that I dont't mind it,—you see I don't; if it had not been so public, I should not mind it in the least—you know you found me looking so well, and so well dressed. Oh! if you had but the tongue of a woman to repeat what you see and hear!" And, then, once the restraint was shaken off, she ran on without consideration or thought, save of herself. No sympathy with her unfortunate husband, (oh, those late marriages of convenienee!)no care for the future of her child; no terror as to the misery the ruin of one mercantile man is sure to entail on others; no vision of homes made desolate; no thought, no feeling but for self.

At last I determined to leave her—my mission unaccomplished, for I had done her no service, and could learn nothing of her husband. She had dressed herself in gauds to impress upon me her indifference to circumstances and opinions; nor would she let me depart, after her agitation had subsided, without certain mean and fishing questions, repeated over and over again, as to what the Middletons said, and how Florence looked, proving that her mind was even poorer than I

had imagined it to be. To the last, even knowing me as she did, she did not seem to understand how anything except curiosity could prompt a visit, from which all her former associates had shrunk. She rang the bell with more than her usual energy, and it echoed, I fancied, mockingly through the house. As I passed the cloak-closet little Helen rushed out, and dragged me into the breakfast-room.

"Just give me one real, true kiss before you go," said the impetuous child. "I cannot kiss anyone before *her* as if I loved them, and I do love you so! my own dear NOBODY, who often petted me, and lectured me—and taught me to pray—and tried to teach me to be good. I read quite well now, and could sing you five or six of Mary Ryland's nice ballads. Mamma has been having new dresses made, and she has them so often altered, that Rachel takes them, and waits, and then Mary sings to me. And," she added, "may I tell mamma that you asked me to come and spend a day with you, and she will let me, perhaps?"

"But I have not asked you, dear Helen." The child raised her large lustrous eyes to mine.

"But you can if you like."

"Helen, dear, mamma is in trouble, and you ought to stay with and comfort her."

"But I am never with her, *never*, except when she wants to make a show of me, and that's not often now."

"How do you mean 'make a show of you?'"

"Oh, make me sing, or repeat poetry, or dance my shawl-dance."

"And do you like this show-work, Helen?" I inquired, trembling almost for the reply, dreading that the tremulous dew would be shaken from the bud ere it became a rose.

"Oh, yes, dearly!" she replied, clapping her little hands, "dearly! It is so pleasant to be praised, and called clever, and caressed; but it is dull now—papa is away, and no company comes; and if I write ever so many verses on my slate, I have no one to read them to but Rachel."

"And what does Rachel say?"

"Why, she says it is better to hem and sew, though I know she does not think so, for she makes me tell them ten times over, and looks so pleased; and mamma never cares to hear them, except when there is company. Will you hear my last poem?"

This poetic fancy in my little friend, who I saw was already tainted by her mother's vanity, was new to me; and, though holding in abhorrence all childish exhibitions, my curiosity got the better of my judgment, and Helen brought her slate. The writing was so bad that I could make nothing of it, but the little maid was determined not to be foiled; she read it aloud, with an emphasis and a feeling that quite astonished me. The subject was unchild-like, it was a sort of sonnet to the stars, and would have done no discredit, either in metre or feeling, to any of our minor poets.

"But did you really compose this yourself, my dear child?"

"Oh yes, and it is not at all my best."

"And so you love the stars, and to watch them from—

'Where the laburnum sheds its golden blooms.'"

She looked at me with a very peculiar expression.

"It is all make-believe, you know, nothing but that," she replied, bursting into a merry laugh, "all make-believe. I do not much care for the stars, and the laburnum died last year—it is all the make-believe of my own head. I write all day long, now that the music master, and the dancing master do not come. I take my dear slate about with me all day, and steal it under my pillow at night, I do love my slate—and tell it all my secrets; but don't whisper it to mamma, for one day she told me to go down, as she wanted to speak to Rachel, and I waited on the stairs, and heard her tell nurse that I must not pore so much over my slate."

The memory of Florence's bright and practical sense of honour came to me at that moment—even while the fascinating child spoke—and I said, "But surely you did not listen.?"

She only smiled—"I *heard;* no one can help hearing," she replied, promptly.

I then sat down, placed her on my lap, and explained to her how it was and why it was, she had no right to listen to what her

mother did not wish her to hear, and that if she did so, no good or honourable person would love her. The colour mounted to her cheeks by degrees, and, at last, she nestled close to me, and I felt the blessed tears of shame and regret upon her face. I did all honour to the talent so suddenly discovered in the child, but my heart rejoiced when I found that hers expanded at my reproof—I dreaded—apprehensive it might have closed against my words—but on the contrary, she clung more closely to me, her little arms twined round my neck.

"Do ask that I may spend a day with you," she murmured again. "When the summer comes, and I may take my slate into the garden, I never shall be dull, for then I can write, but now it is so cold to sit in the nursery and make stories all to myself; Rachel calls them 'rubbish,' and bids me hold my tongue—nobody understands me—and I must not let mamma know that I ever speak to Jerry."

"But you should not do so, if mamma tells you not."

"But papa always said I might if I did not tell," replied the child, too quickly—and there

I was on the horns of a dilemma, fixed between both.

"And I do like Jerry—he is so funny—tells me about my ancestors, papa's *forebears*, as he calls them; and such a number of stories about fairies—do you know—only I think mamma would kill papa if she thought it, and I am sure you will not tell—but I do believe—hush—no one can hear, can they?—no!—Well then—I really think papa's papa—or grandpapa, or something, was"—she looked about—to be certain no one could hear the secret she was so anxious to communicate—and then whispered—"I do think that my papa's papa—or mamma was Irish!—there!"

I told Helen I would request her mamma to let her spend a day with me, in a little time, and endeavoured to impress upon her. that she must not leave her mother while she was in trouble.

"Trouble, indeed," repeated Helen, "trouble!" and the tone of the voice, and the short prematurely bitter laugh, told too truly how lightly the 'trouble' was regarded.

During my homeward walk, I thought over

and over to what this contradictory culture of so fertile a soil must lead. One parent had evidently been acting upon the child in opposition to the other, and yet both (and how pregnant with a disastrous future was the fact!) had been sowing the seed of falsehood in a mind so naturally prone to fiction and its exaggerations, that every effort ought to have been made to stablish and strengthen it in what was real and true. The love of display, the panting for admiration, so innocently avowed to me by this fascinating child, was not as dangerous as the evident want of moral training in the first great lesson of life—perfect and entire truthfulness!

The fairy tales of Jerry, and the wild ballads of Mary Ryland, were calculated to increase the fever of an imagination already active beyond its strength; but that was a minor evil. How wretched is the prospect of the child whose mother feels not the influence of that power which directs all things rightly! A mother may lack accomplishments, rank, station, and have no claim to what is deemed the higher order of intellect; she may be plain

of speech and of manner, unformed or even rude; but if she has tasted of the fountain of living waters, if she understand and practice the simple rule of RIGHT, if she is the handmaid of truth, and if deceit and vanity have never sheltered beneath her roof—if she is faithful as a friend, gentle as a mistress, and of a loving, duteous nature towards him to whom she is bound till life's pilgrimage is ended, then her children are certain of the best and purest training for time and for eternity. Judgment also (for every child requires peculiar training), is especially needed in education; yet I have known women, simple in other things, of almost intuitive wisdom in the teaching of children—plodding onward with a few fixed principles, modified by tenderness and affection, according as the strength or weakness of the child required assistance—combat and overcome difficulties which —— but, dear me, I am perplexing myself, and not enlightening others, by recalling the train of thought, the feelings and anxieties, the hopes and regrets which that dear child occasioned me, even then. Nay, I remember being espe-

cially shocked at finding myself contemplating the idea—almost, I fear, the hope—that Mrs. Lyndsey might not live very long, and that then Helen and Florence might be educated together. What wicked thoughts find entrance into our hearts at times!

CHAPTER VI.

"My female friends, whose tender hearts
Have better learn'd to act their parts,
Receive the news in doleful dumps."

SWIFT.

I FEAR my friends may find tedious the noting of persons and things by which these pages have been hitherto filled; but it is necessary I should be thus minute at the commencement, for out of what are considered the small nothings of childhood arise the great plans which sanctify a generation, or the storms and tempests that revolutionize a world. The near connexion that subsisted between Helen and Florence was, owing to Mrs. Lyndsey's ignorant and perverse mind, the great barrier

to their knowing each other; yet I most earnestly desired these children to become acquainted. I saw how valuable an influence the high principles of Florence might exercise over her young cousin, while Helen's quickness would stimulate Florence; and I longed to interest Helen's talent and imagination in the cause of the better and holier attributes of our nature. If ever I felt certain of anything, it was that this child's career must be brilliant: no matter how circumstances might for a time retard or obscure her genius, it *must* achieve celebrity, if not distinction, in the end. It was impossible to say how the talent would be directed—it might come forth in one way or in another; but, as surely as the lightning bursts from the thunder-cloud, so surely would that child's career rivet the attention of the world. Florence!—dear, right-minded Florence!—so little can we see into the future, that I had no concern for her. I did not know the world then as I know it now; I thought that, brought up as she was, she *must* escape the pains and penalties that fall to the lot of those not so highly favoured. "No

cause to be anxious about Florence," I would say; "she will have a competency, and, marrying some admirable man, be as happy as her mother. But Helen, that bright-eyed, intelligent creature! who seems only to lack power to give her thoughts and feelings words —whose heart and brain are full of love and imagination—the tone of whose young voice is music, and who is balancing so fearfully at this moment between right and wrong, that the question is, whether she will achieve the skies, or be sunk into an abyss too dreadful to think of; for her there will be no medium! Under her parent's circumstances, what is to become of her? How or where is she to go?"

I longed for the solitude of my own room, to think for her; but my sufferings for that day were not ended. I heard the clatter of voices as I passed my drawing room window, and there was Mrs. Brevet-Major, Mrs. Bruce, the eldest Miss Saunders, and other neighbours, waiting, it seemed to me—and I hope I was not unjust or uncharitable in the supposition—for the express purpose of talking over

the case of the 'poor Lyndseys' to some new ear. Your true scandal-monger abounds in wordy pity for the victim, whose troubles, but for the activity of such agency, might have passed away like a summer cloud And so they raised a sort of funeral-howl over the Lyndseys, wailing their distress; showing, too, what extraordinary second-sight they possessed, for they one and all declared they had prophecied what Mrs. Lyndsey's pride, and Mr. Lyndsey's indolence must come to; but they never had suspected—never fancied—he could have been so lost to himself as to have forged —that was indeed a climax!

"But, had he?"

"Some one of the house in Change-alley *had*, that was certain, because it was in the papers—at least, somebody said it was—or a hint of it; and it was so distressing to know people who did such things." And, with my heart and head aching, I uttered a mechanical "yes" or "no."

Nothing perplexes your genuine scandal-monger so much as a brief monosyllable: there is a desire that the news be properly appreciated, and, if it is not, silence conveys a tacit

reproof that is anything but agreeable. It was curious to see how my visitors looked at each other. Mrs. Brevet-Major Cobb shook her feathers, and sat cross-legged, and then varied her position by placing her feet on the fender, while observing that "she never was mistaken in her estimate of character; her impulses, and instincts, and reasonings were always right; she would say so much for herself, whatever other people said or thought." And she always lauded herself in a trumpet-voice, which echoed through the room. To this I said "Yes," a "yes" in the wrong place, for which she visited me with some thunder-frowns, while her cheeks became very crimson indeed. Mrs. Bruce said I looked ill; another that I seemed out of spirits; a third, that I had a tender heart; a fourth, that I knew a great deal, but would not tell; when, greatly to my relief, the servant announced Major Cobb. It is very ridiculous to observe how the sitting of a female committee of scandal is immediately broken up by the entrance of a gentleman, although the gentleman may be as prone to the vice as the ladies; but,

somehow, it is a thing which both usually avoid when in each other's society, simply because they desire to be well thought of by each other. If women continue to talk scandal in an uninterrupted sort of way before a man, it is a decided proof that they hold him in no sort of respect or esteem, and set no earthly value on his good opinion. When the Major entered, a dead silence succeeded the chatter I had just determined to end. He complimented me on my good looks; and he did so briefly and rapidly, an evidence that he was in great haste to get on as fast as possible to some other topic. His cheeks were puffed out like love-apples, and the corners of his mouth were in perpetual agitation; his wife exclaimed rather sharply—

"Now, Major, what is it? You are champing your bit—your *new* bit—like a war-horse."

"Madam," said the Major, lifting up a chair, and striking it down again, to ascertain its strength, and then sitting down upon it with the weight of a grampus and the gravity of a judge; "Madam, whatever 'bit' it may be, it

is *not a 'bit' of scandal*;" and he looked round triumphantly, thinking he had said something very good and very witty; and as he was accounted a rich man, the ladies smiled and tittered, and murmured, "Oh fie! Major." And that everlasting Miss Saunders smirked and twittered out, "Oh shame! *dear* Major!" upon which Mrs. Brevet bridled, and said "that unmarried ladies ought to have no dears;" and the Major clapped his little fat red hands, and exclaimed, "Jealous, by Jove!" and then Mrs. Brevet looked so disclaimingly indignant, that her feathers quivered again; and I could see her great thick fingers close gradually, until her hands looked like knotted clubs; while the Major chuckled, and Mrs. Bruce, thinking to turn it off, said, "But then the Major is such a *very little* dear;" and this made matters worse. For Mrs. Brevet resented indignantly any observation on her husband's size—and in a low grating tone, asked Mrs. Bruce to "repeat and explain her last observation—which she did not understand." But the Major suddenly arose, and placed his hand on his double-breasted coat, and speaking as it

he were at the head of his brigade, exclaimed—

"Ladies, I have been into the City;" I was so glad to inquire if there was any foreign news. "And I am come from the City," he added, without noticing my inquiry about news; "and I have the pleasure to tell you that—*Lyndsey's afloat again!*"

My heart beat so rapidly, that I could hardly breathe; there was a confused murmur of questions, and inquiries, and ejaculations, but what they were I know not.

"He's a fine fellow," continued the Major; "a very fine fellow; pays twenty shillings in the pound. He went abroad, when you all missed him, to some friend in Holland, and arranged to pay his creditors to the last farthing, by giving up all he had in the world."

"But I thought you said he was afloat again," said Miss Saunders, in a disappointed tone; "I though you said he was afloat again."

"Aye, in marching order, John?" added Mrs. Brevet-Major.

"And so he is!" exclaimed the Major, standing on tip-toe, falling back on his heels,

and rising again on his toes—and looking as happy as if he had just won a twenty thousand pound prize in the lottery, or stolen a march upon Tippoo Saib ; "all Hampstead declared he could not pay sixpence in the pound. And Miss Saunders, I fancy, led the forlorn hope in that forgery report—eh, Miss Saunders?"

"Indeed, Major, I did no such thing," said Miss Saunders, growing very red.

"Well, lady, if you did not *lead*, you and the other ladies *brought up the rearguard*, I am certain of that; and you all cut the house as decidedly as if the yellow fever had been raging there."

"Why, Mrs. Lyndsey is a very disagreeable sort of woman," said Mrs. Bruce.

"And so proud," added Miss Saunders, "that we knew she would not like to be seen by even her dearest friends, while any suspicion attached to her precious husband's character," she added, with a vain effort to look sympathizing and sentimental.

"Precious drumsticks!" ejaculated the Major, who always became excited at the good fortune or honourable conduct of a friend, and

could render right soldierly homage to the merits of a foe. "Precious drumsticks," he repeated; "why ladies, you all *know* she never cared a farthing for him, and what grieves me is that I have proof she has neither known nor cared where he has been during the last fortnight. I know it, madam, I know it!"

"Then I must say it was more shame for you, Major Cobb, to know anything of the kind without acquainting me with it," said Mrs. Brevet-Major, starting up and pacing along the drawing-room, a pennon of downy feathers floating after her, so that she reminded one of a flagstaff in motion; "I have no notion of married men having secrets."

"But *they* may have a notion that way, sometimes, madam. Besides, it was a private despatch—and a soldier's honour, Mrs. Cobb;" and the little man again laid his fat hand on his heart and bowed. The lady was somewhat appeased, and resumed her seat.

"Then, the reports have been false, after all," said Miss Saunders in a mournful tone of voice.

"Not at all," replied Mrs. Bruce, cheerfully, "the Major still says he is ruined."

"I beg your pardon, madam," said the Major "I said no such thing."

"Why, you said he has given up all he had in the world."

"Ay, paid twenty shillings in the pound, and left himself a beggar," observed the Major's wife; "surely that is ruin!"

"Not a bit of it," replied the sturdy soldier. "He has an honest heart, and an unsullied name, and these are good stock-in-trade for any Englishman to begin life upon. If he had a cheerful home and a loving wife, such a helpmate as you were to me when we followed the drum together, you often carrying the knapsack, dearie," and he looked tenderly towards Mrs. Brevet, who returned it by a frown and a pursing in of her lips that intimated silence; "if he had that man's first and greatest blessing, a good wife, poor Lyndsey would in truth be afloat on the waves of prosperity; for when the wind-up of his affairs came to-day; when he met his creditors—you know what a plain simple man he is——"

"And indolent," put in Mrs. Cobb, whose 'duty walk' was eleven miles per diem, and

who had no idea of any exertion that was not bodily.

"Well, my dear, he never was accustomed to the forced marches we had in our early days. I remember——"

"Remember what took place in Change-alley, if you please, Major Cobb, as you have been there," suggested the lady.

"Well, when he met the creditors, and they came prepared for the worst, looking as black as a detachment of hungry niggers, there was Lyndsey as brave as a lion; and though, poor fellow, he has grown thin, I never saw such a smile of satisfaction on his lips, or such clear intelligent brightness in his eyes. He was quite another man, strong in his own rectitude, and when he spoke—he spoke like a Briton! he could not have spoken better if he had been at the head of a regiment."

"Well!" exclaimed Miss Saunders, "who would have thought it? Everybody said he had run away; and the reports were really so queer, that, as Mrs. Bruce, and dear Mrs. Cobb, and the Lilleys, and all, did not call, I did not like to intrude on Mrs. Lyndsey."

Then Mrs. Bruce muttered she would have called if Mrs. Cobb had called, and Mrs. Cobb stood firmly upon her rank and propriety, and vowed she never could let herself down to call upon a suspected person.

"Not, my love," said the Major, twinkling his eyes, "unless of a certain rank."

"Major Cobb!"

"Yes, you remember the Rajah's wives, and—and ladies?"

"A matter of curiosity, Major Cobb."

"And Mrs. General Pritch——?"

"Stop, Major; that was only on account of your position, and to show my respect for my commanding officer," replied the lady, tossing her plumed head.

"And now, after all," continued the accommodating Miss Saunders, "perhaps it is better as it is. If Mr. Lyndsey must begin again, of course they will not live as they did; and it might be very painful to them, if their *old* friends witnessed their *new* style," and she simpered as if bitterness were wit.

"You meant *acquaintances*, Miss Saunders," I said. There was no other reply to her mean-

ness, and she fell back upon her original observation, that appearances had been greatly against them.

"I don't care the dying squeak of a cracked fife for appearances," said the Major, rapidly; "nor for circumstantial evidence, nor for the evidence of my own ears—sight—taste—smell—nor for the witnesses of my own senses or any body's senses—against the character of a friend!—If I know a man to be just and true—if I have had proof of that truth and justice—I would believe myself deceived by myself, sooner than credit anything to his disadvantage.—Ay, ladies, smile or sneer—or set James Adam Cobb, Brevet-Major of the Bengal Cavalry, down as a fool if you please—but the first *man* who dares to look, when I speak of my friend Lyndsey—as *you* look Miss Saunders at this moment, or as *you* look, Mrs. Bruce—I'll have great pleasure in calling him out, aud running him through the body—that's my argument with *men*, ladies.—It's a greater glory to see a man of feeling and honor extricated from his difficulties, than to see a lion break through the hunter's toils, and

rush across the plain to his native forest— !"

"Major, you grow poetic," sneered Miss Saunders.

"No, Miss—excuse me—I do not; but I should like to call a drum-head court-martial, and try all scandal-mongers—male and female. I almost fancy the air of Hampstead creates a good appetite, not only for food, but for evil speaking.—This air is poisoned—I say *poisoned*, ladies, by false tongues !"

And again the warm-hearted Major balanced himself backwards and forwards on his heels and toes.

"And more than that," he added, "you and I, my dear, will call there to-morrow. I ought, if I had done my duty as a man and a husband, to have insisted upon this long before." Mrs. Cobb's feathered bonnet oscillated, and she repeated—"Insisted! Major!—insisted, sir!—Strange language to use to me, sir."

"Then madam, it shall be strange no longer, you shall not always wear the little dragoon's boots—and other things.—We will go and call on Mrs. Lyndsey before the sun sets, as sure as your name is Molly Cobb."

Luckily for the lord of the creation, Miss Saunders muttered—"thank God I am not married"—and Mrs. Brevet heard it,—this gave to her wrath a new direction.

"It is rather curious, madam, to hear a lady thank God for the overthrow of her hopes and expectations—the Miss Saunderses have been rather celebrated husband-hunters —in their day."

"*In their day*,"—that was a cruel cut, and Miss Saunders felt it, because it was true.

"You are not quite yourself, and hardly know what you are saying this morning, ma'am," replied Miss Saunders—then letting her head fall on one side, and casting up her eyes, with what her sisters called 'their sweet Jane's Madonna-like expression,"—she added —"but I can forgive you—poor woman!"

Mrs. Brevet-Major fired tremendously at the "poor woman," and there is no knowing to what lengths the ladies might have proceeded, had I not, for the sake of even "the treacherous peace," the only peace that can exist between pettish, weak-minded, irritable women, who hate each other, not for the sake

of each other's bad, but each other's good qualities, started a new idea.

"Would there be a sale at the Lyndsey's,"—nothing used to excite the ordinary mass of women residing in a suburban district, so much as a sale—except, perhaps, a shop selling off.—The bait took—it was wonderful how they ran at, and ran over the furniture.

The major took no part in the discussion that followed; for he had suddenly seized a newspaper containing an account of one of our victories, and the ladies talked with as little restraint as if he had not been present. There was room for much speculation as regarded the Lyndseys—whether the furniture would or would not be sold? whether Mrs. Lyndsey would ever consent to part with her china, especially the 'Limoges' bowl and the yellow dragon, which Miss Saunders owned she would like to possess? whether she would dress as much as usual? and which of the four servants she would keep? All declared their conviction that the house would be disposed of, and wondered who would take it; and Mrs. Bruce became elevated by honest indignation

at the only thing I ventured to say, namely, that I hoped Mr. Lyndsey would be able to retain Jerry and the brown cob. The idea of a man who *had* been suspected of forgery; who had avoided his creditors for a whole fortnight, for though it was with the purpose of obtaining the means of paying them, still he had avoided them; the actually paying twenty shillings in the pound, and leaving himself penniless—were reasons why he should *not* keep a groom and a brown horse! She thought I knew the duty people owed the public; that it was a public duty to starve composedly, if they had not the means of living; and that it was a positive dishonesty for poor people to long or desire, or even look at (except in the way of abstract admiration) any of the luxuries which are the property of the rich; and she (being a learned lady) talked profoundly about heroic poverty and Spartan virtue, and the holiness of self-denial, until I really became ashamed of myself for having said anything so dishonest as expressing a wish that poor Mr. Lyndsey should retain Jerry and the brown cob! It is astonishing how some people,

by the dint and din of words, manage to confuse your ideas by the non-arrangement of their own. Mrs. Bruce terminated the discussion by a homily on self-denial, and would have enlarged upon all the cardinal virtues, but that she suddenly recollected the hour, and turned her lamentations into a note of fear that the turkey and chine would be overdone.

CHAPTER VII.

"Old time, old friends, and old events recalling,
With many a circumstance of trivial note,
To memory dear, and of importance grown:
How shall I tell them in a stranger's ear!"

LAMB.

IT was an undeniable fact, and a few weeks proved it to be so—that Mr. Lyndsey had more than saved a reputation; he had made one! He, the stolid, un-ideal man—whom his neighbours hardly respected, and certainly misunderstood—became noted as 'honest Lyndsey;' and, strangely enough, his wife caught the idea—her husband being remarkable for anything raised him for a time in her opinion. She did not sympathize with the cause, the

effect was enough—Mr. Lyndsey had attained a celebrity. At first she was outrageous at his folly; she could not comprehend why he should do so or so; but suddenly she became enthusiastic in praise of his integrity. The large house was sold, and a small house near Haverstock Hill chosen as their future residence. It was imagined they would have left the neighbourhood; but both seemed to have entertained a sort of sympathy for the old road. There was no public sale, though more than half the furniture disappeared. But Mrs. Lyndsey kept her yellow dragon and her Limoges bowl, and suddenly took up with all kinds of pastoral and rural notions. She twined natural flowers, particularly jessamine, in her hair, discarded pompous silks, and arrayed herself in white muslin, with pale pink or cerulean blue breast-knots. She would have dared a crook and a garland to companion her shepherdess-hat, and sat under a tree with a fat, white poodle, instead of a lamb, had there been a tree of sufficient size to warrant the experiment on the plot of grass called the 'lawn.' She drank milk instead of wine; and

exercised her tuneless voice on pastoral ballads, blending 'Sweet Lass of Richmond Hill' with 'Sally in our Alley.' She used to be sublimely ridiculous; now she had taken to be pastorally absurd.

The lower order of people have a high respect for what may be termed *common honesty;* they understand well what it is to pay debts and to receive money; and Mrs. Lyndsey's small vanity was flattered by the bows and courtesies of the little dealers, who testified their admiration of her husband by increased civility to herself. But it was not alone the homage of the poor that elevated her husband in Mrs. Lyndsey's eyes. Sir Jacob Harris, one of the rich men on the Heath, one of the mysterious dwellers within park-palings, called on Mr. Lyndsey and tendered his services—with true English sincerity. How delighted Major Cobb was to have *that* to tell, and how pleased Mrs. Bruce would have been to shake hands with Mrs. Lyndsey coming out of church the following Sunday; but Mrs. Lyndsey turned her back upon her, and, forgetting her assumed pastoral simplicity, stalked proudly forth from the

church porch, while Sir Jacob took Lyndsey's arm, and, in the face of the bright sun and the congregation, walked him more than half-way up the hill, and then drove him to Harris-house. In the evening the carriage rattled him home again—Miss Saunders saw him in it with her own eyes! Sir Jacob had friends abroad, people said, and no one seemed to understand how Mr. Lyndsey obtained the money which freed him from his embarrassments. When the Middletons heard of Mr. Lyndsey's difficulties, all the past was forgotten; Mrs. Middleton wrote a most tender and affectionate letter to Mrs. Lyndsey, inviting her to Hampton-lodge; speaking with the utmost love of Helen and her brother, and urging that their house ought to be considered her 'brother and sister's' country home. Mrs. Lyndsey drew gall and wormwood from this letter; so much so, that, if possible, the families were more estranged than ever. Any one who observed how matters were managed at Violet-cottage would have seen Jerry early in the morning, or late at night, in and out of the knife-house and the back

kitchen, cleaning the knives and shoes, or brushing Mr. Lyndsey's coat, with a hissing sort of noise, as though he were currying a horse. No one seemed to know or care when he came or went: as he did not draw upon Mrs. Lyndsey's solitary hundred a-year (which, to hear her talk, you migh have imagined a thousand) she had ceased to object to his services and did not disdain to employ him about sundry messages of her own, his reward being a kind word, a brief "good morning" from Mr. Lyndsey, or a bright smile from Helen, whom he regarded with a mingling of pride and admiration, which I believe no other creature beside, except myself, felt at that time. It was at first a sore parting between Jerry and his master, if, indeed, parting it could be called, for Jerry refused to accept the home Mrs. Middleton offered him, and engaged himself as a help with his old friend, the landlord of 'Jack Straw's Castle,' where he could, he said, "keep looking after the master, see that his place was always secured in the stage, which journeyed twice a-day, weather permitting, to the Bank, and arrange his great-coat comfortably if, the

day being fine, he chose to ride with the coachman." Such were Jerry's pleasures, and if he had had but the brown cob to look after there is but little doubt but Jerry would have been happy; the horse, however, had been stolen, after it was determined he should be sold, and Jerry never mentioned his old favourite, but consoled himself with an occasional visit to 'Staggers,' who became the butcher's property, and called, as Jerry observed, "quite naturally" at Violet-cottage for orders. Time passed, and the civilities of the poor, the bows of Sir Jacob, and the 'sensation' created by Mr. Lyndsey's honesty, were passing with time: he worked as hard as his nature and habits permitted him to work in his humbler calling, but very soon found how much more difficult it was to become the sole active person, than remain the almost sleeping partner of an old established firm. To be in the City every day at ten, and not return till six, and that when he was fifty years of age, at the period when, although there is abundant energy to carry on old habits, there is not sufficient to contract new ones, was more than he could endure. The hero-

ism of his one great act had for a period rendered him a new man; and, as long as its freshness lasted and its excitement continued, he kept up, to the astonishment of all who were acquainted with his previous habits. But it could not continue; some of the City men, like Sir Jacob, respected, and at first helped him forward, but many will set the wheel going who tire of its monotony; and at the end of three years poor Lyndsey was a bowed-down and heavy-hearted man, suffering in mind and body. He had not prospered; he had never been a man of business, and again felt himself on the verge of a real calamity, trifling both in its amount and consequences, but pressing heavily upon his heart, for now he seemed to have no power of doing as he had done—having nothing to sacrifice. Mrs. Lyndsey's fancy for a cottage had continued as long as the one idea retained its influence; but, latterly, her eternal repining and discontent were wearing away whatever remained of her unfortunate husband's health or intellect, as in addition to the remnant of her fortune, which was really inadequate even to her ra-

tional wants, she was perpetually worrying her own relatives—purse proud, vulgar people—for what was literally considered by them as alms-giving. Helen was threatened that if she told her papa that her mother had this or that, she should not have whatever song or story she desired; while Mr. Lyndsey, on the other hand, would bestow little luxuries on his child, which came from Mrs. Middleton, and which her mother would not have allowed her to accept had she known whence they proceeded. This wretched system was pursued without any counteracting influence, except what I had it in my power occasionally to exercise, by pointing out to Helen the misery which mystery and untruth must create during our progress in life, even if viewed independently of their great moral wrong; and this the clear-sighted girl perceived in all its enormity. She saw it distinctly, and yet she practised it as a juggler practises the sleight-of-hand at which he laughs. She, too, would laugh at deceptions which curdled my blood; and so much had my affection increased for her, that I could not chide her as I would have chid another. Her early

promise of beauty had not been fulfilled as her mother had expected; at fourteen, she was a small and rather ungraceful girl, her form and manner child-like in the extreme, while her face was one of almost painful intelligence.

Sir Jacob Harris had been heard to say, it was a great pity Mr. Lyndsey had not accepted the aid he at first offered; but Mr. Lyndsey had no claim on him, and the offer was not renewed. The major and his wife had gone, for a few months, into Devonshire; and it was evident that Mr. Lyndsey was surrounded by a shoal of petty difficulties, of which Helen, even at that tender age, was the depository. Reflection was forced npon her by sympathy. Her mother's health improved, while her irritability increased; her selfishness concentrated, as the sphere of her enjoyments became narrowed, so as to render her more odious than ever; and, night after night, Mr. Lyndsey returned to a homeless home, for in it there was no peace, no rest, no refuge Helen was in her mother's way; she grudged the love borne to her husband by their own

child; *she* wanted all that affection to be bestowed on herself, although she did not value it a straw. If Helen sang, she complained of the power of her voice; if she wrote, of her round shoulders; and if she saw her reading, she grumbled at books and book-making. Nor did Helen's proud spirit brook this patiently—she was not patient; and, though her replies were few, they were apt and bitter. Then Mrs. Lyndsey would complain to me, and no creature endowed with life and feeling could endure my reproofs more sweetly than did Helen. She would sit and listen, while the huge tears rolled from beneath her half-closed lids—listen to words far harder than my thoughts, invariably answering by the one observation—"Oh, I could bear anything—everything—if she did but love me! Why does she not love me? What have I done not to be loved?" Even then, her young heart yearned for the love which is the life-spring of woman's existence. This was her reply—her sorrow! but sorrow and youth do not dwell long together; the next hour, her clear, pure voice might be heard ringing

through the air, outsinging the nightingales. One evening, I walked down to pay my visit, anxious to seize any opportunity to repeat the offers of sympathy and service with which the Middleton's entrusted me. I paused at the gate, for I heard both Mr. and Mrs. Lyndsey's voice in loud dispute; and, though they never minded me, yet it is always painful to witness the war of words between man and wife. But as I turned away, Helen rushed out, and, greatly agitated, entreated me to enter.

"I am so glad you are come," said Mrs. Lyndsey—"so very glad. You have known how wonderfully I have borne all my privations—everything I had no right to expect when I married; and now, when I ask for a few pounds just to pay the maid and things, to be told I cannot have them, and all that! so I have really made up my mind—quite!—to go to my brother Ben, who has lost his wife, and has written to say that he will be glad to have me—very glad! I am sure Mr. Lyndsey won't miss me in the least; he is in that vile City from morning till night, and never brings anything out of it; except the

blacks on his cravat; and no one can say I don't behave handsome. Of course, I must keep my paltry hundred a-year, and my yellow dragon, and the Limoges china, and all that, but for the rest, the furniture and all, though *my* money paid for it, Mr. Lyndsey, they can remain." Her husband made no reply, and she continued—"Your affairs seem to be in such a state, that I can do you no good. You'll be obliged to do something, or get money somehow. The people seem to have forgotten all that silly honesty of yours, and bother as much about their little penny-farthing bills, as if they had never had the pounds and pounds they have received; and I told you how it would be, at the time!"

"Have you done?" inquired Mr. Lyndsey, in that tone which the voice of utter despair can only give.

"Yes; our friend here sees as well as I do, that if you are in such difficulty, every mouth less to feed is a relief, and so it must be a relief to get rid of me, at all events, for a time."

Helen continued standing beside her father's chair, while Mrs. Lyndsey was speaking—her

cheek flushed, her eyes glittering and flashing, her lips compressed, and her well-shaped nostril swelling.

More than once I placed my finger on my own lip, and looked at her; but I saw her impetuosity could not be much longer restrained. At last it burst forth, but not before her mother had again spoken.

"It will not take me long to pack up my little things; though, when I married, I had a most abundant wardrobe, Mr. Lyndsey; and though they did not ask Helen, yet I am sure my brother——"

"I will not leave my father!" exclaimed Helen, vehemently; "I will stay with him as long as I live."

"No, no, Helen," he replied, in a voice lowered by emotion. "No; you had better a great deal go with your mother; I never heard her speak so sensibly before. Go, Helen, go! why don't you all go? why should any one remain with me? God knows I have no claim on your love—none on yours—nor on yours, my child! Aye, there it is; that is the bitterness—*my hild!* In a few days I shall be lodged in a jail

—that will be the end of it—in a HARD STONE JAIL! and it is all, I dare say, for the best. Honest Lyndsey in a jail! There, child, don't hang about me so; why, you hang closer to me than my troubles! There's a thing for a man to say who expects to go to jail. Poor girl! poor Helen! You came to me when you were not wanted; and now——"

"Oh, very well," said Mrs. Lyndsey, hysterically; "I don't want her, I'm sure. I never did—that is quite true. She came when she was not wanted. If I had had *my* way with her, she might have cut a figure in the world. She was like my family at first, but you trained her in falsehoods and things; and now you can have the good of it. She may want to come to me by-'n-bye."

"Never!" said Helen; "never! Oh, some mothers have loved their children so dearly, that their children ought to die for them; but you never loved me, mother—you never loved me!" and she twined her arms round her father's neck, and wept passionately on his shoulder. I would have given much to see tears in Mr. Lyndsey's burning eyes, but

they continued dry ; while his wife gabbled on, without thought or feeling, all about herself—what she had endured, what she had done, what she would do ; recapitulating what she called her 'sufferings,' as if no one had ever suffered before, or as if she had been alone in them. At last, with a most helpless expression of voice and look, he turned to me, and whispered, "Is she gone yet? Make her go —make her go ! If she stays much longer I shall be quite mad ; the little reason I ever had will be all—all gone !" Then Helen soothed him. Oh ! how like an angel she seemed, kneeling by his side, filling his ears with her affectionate words, and diverting his attention to the small, simple things which, when well, constituted his amusements. At last, Mrs. Lyndsey turned her worked-up wrath on Helen ; she upbraided her with a want of natural affection ; she called her ungrateful, hypocritical, lying ! She said the very locket that glittered on her throat was her gift ; that her *beggarly* father had not paid five pounds for her clothing during the last three years. Terror-stricken as I was at per-

ceiving that Mr. Lyndsey heard not what she said, I was thankful for the unconsciousness; for he still kept whispering, "Is she gone?—is she gone?" and looking round as though he saw her not, and more than once murmuring, in an awful tone, "I deserve it—I deserve it." After many fruitless attempts, I succeeded in drawing Mrs. Lyndsey from the room, to which I was but too quickly recalled by Helen's cries, and I found Mr. Lyndsey stricken by a fit. Helen's presence of mind did not forsake her; she flew for the nearest medical advice, and in a few moments our good doctor was by his side.

It was not until the next morning that Mr. Lyndsey was pronounced out of immediate danger. Mrs. Lyndsey had gone to bed and slept soundly, saying that her 'staying up could do no good;' there she was right.

Helen and poor Jerry watched by Mr. Lyndsey all night; and when I came next day, the smile of recognition which fluttered on my old friend's lips, convinced me he was better. He beckoned me to his side, and tried several times to pronounce articulately, "Is she gone?"

Some few creatures are sent into the world in the guise of human beings, living, breathing models of their Maker, yet partaking, in their nothingness, little of either the angel or the demon—creatures doing no good, and intending no harm; aimless and purposeless in their lives; without sympathies and without affections; their hearts hollowed by selfishness, and yet passing from childhood to old age; partaking of life with its multitude of blessings and beauties, yet blessing nothing in return. There are not many such, although position and circumstances harden and obscure much that could increase and multiply the happiness of those around us. There are not many who do not taste the sweets of life's sympathies—who do not in some way reciprocate kindness—who do not honour the Giver of all good, by giving in their turn to others something of the abundance bestowed on them; not many who, bestowing coin at intervals, and in small quantities, fancy the world and its creatures have no other claims; that if they open their purses, they may close their hearts; that the world has

no demand upon every faculty given us by the Almighty; that we have no right to pay tithe of our wisdom, our care, our joy, our consolations, so that others may partake thereof. There are, I think, but few utterly shut up in themselves, utterly unwilling to bestow, if it be but a kind word or gentle smile, upon a fellow-wayfarer. We have all taints, and blots, and plague spots, hot and cold prejudices, fevers, and brain-sick fancies; we have all something of the tyrant in our natures, willing others to do our will, periodical blindnesses, and a proneness to the use of hard unchristian judgments; but we get over these: Nature struggles and conquers. Indeed, I cannot recal one other so utterly heartless, so intensely selfish, so dead to every feeling of propriety, as well as humanity, as was Mrs. Lyndsey; I do not believe that when first I knew her she would have acted as she did on the morning when she left her husband and her child: disappointment, and the perpetual bickerings which had arisen between them, had hardened her naturally unfeeling nature into brutality. She packed up the dragon in the tenderest

manner, and quitted Violet-cottage with as little concern for the future of Mr. Lyndsey and Helen as if she had been going, to use her peculiar expression, "to fetch a walk upon the Heath." She talked, too, about returning "when Mr. Lyndsey's affairs were wound up:" and when Helen, after her mother had entered the post-chaise, impelled by one of her sudden impulses, rushed to embrace her, Mrs. Lyndsey put her coolly aside, telling her to take care and not break the dragon!

CHAPTER VIII.

"It is my youth that, where I stand,
Surrounds me like a dream;
The sounds that round about me rise
Are what none other hears;
I see what meets no other eyes,
Though mine are dim with tears."

HENRY TAYLOR.

WHEN the shock of this heartless scene had subsided, and the cottage enjoyed an unusual tranquillity, I spoke to Helen of the future, though she, too, regarded me as a 'NOBODY,' and gave voice to her ideas freely. I fancied that of late, at times, she had reserves—thoughts that trembled on her lips, yet rushed back, not in distrust of me, but distrusting themselves. I was deeply grieved to find that

although perfectly aware of her mother's prejudices, she entertained a decided dislike to her aunt, Mrs. Middleton; she feared her as a stern, severe woman. She was jealous of my love for Florence; and if she remembered Mr. Middleton at all, it was as a man devoted to country amusements, which she, in her wilfulness, pronounced coarse and unintellectual. She imbibed her notions of a country gentleman from books supplied to her mother by a circulating library—books she ought never to have read. It was in vain that I reminded her of her mother's ancient dislike to her aunt —a dislike that had increased in proportion to my dear and cherished friend's desire to be of service to her brother: a service which literally would have been one of love. Yet Helen would revert to her mother's *words*, things of mere impure sounds, like the whisperings of an evil dream, which ought to have passed away, and which she insisted she thought not of; yet she did remember them!—and they influenced her, though—(and a most unhappy circumstance it was)—she was perfectly acquainted with her mother's wilful and habitual mis-

representations. This was to me another sad proof of the enduring mischief of careless speaking. Words that are but breath enter into the heart, and dwell therein, although the speaker may have no moral influence; this is more especially the case with the young, whose memory is in action long before judgment has birth—before they have the power either to compare or to combine. I believed Helen to have much clearness of observation; and so she had; yet the impression against Mrs. Middleton had taken deep root. I reasoned with her, and she admitted the force of my reasoning; yet, the next moment, she went back to the words—the foolish, evil words her mother had spoken. I told her, however, I should immediately write to Mrs. Middleton; I showed her, that in the present state of her father's mind, and under existing circumstances, nothing could be arranged without her assistance; and she heard me, listened to me, agreed that all was true, quite true, yet that she would die sooner than be obliged to them. I asked her, would she suffer her father to die rather than seek their aid? and

then she flung herself into my arms in a passion of tears.

Of course I did write to my friend, describing Mr. Lyndsey's state both of body and mind, convinced that the letter would bring both her and Mr. Middleton to town immediately.

Mr. Lyndsey became suddenly better—stronger in body than any one could have imagined possible, after so violent an attack; up and about, more active than I remembered him for a long time; wonderfully collected also, though his mind had evidently been severely shaken; and there was an abruptness in his manner, a quickness in his eye, and a rapidity of utterance which caused both Helen and myself to observe him closely. I discovered a new beauty of this dear girl's character—a watchfulness and tenderness, aided by a clearness of perception, which was quite astonishing at her age.

"My dear father," she said to me, "has evidently framed some plan which gives him pleasure; instead of pondering over his sorrows as he used to do—brooding and sighing

—whispering his troubles to me, lest the very air should repeat them,—he has been smiling to himself, and has written at least two letters, which Jerry took to the counting-house this morning."

"Did you see to whom they were addressed?" I asked.

"No; he placed them under cover to his clerk. He has asked me more than once, if I was quite sure mamma would not come back, and hinted it would be well to get out of her way, so that she should not know where we were. I think he will make a great effort to secrete himself from her."

That day passed, and the next, and no letter from the Middletons.

Jerry came to me in the evening, looking very melancholy and mysterious. "The master," he said, "was mighty quare in himself—mighty quare, intirely; with altogether more sense in him than he had seen since long, long ago—God bless him!—which was a bad sign—a mighty bad sign, and quite unnatural. He didn't seem to think a taste bad of his raal troubles, and they as thick as blackberries in

harvest; he took no concern for them. It was to be expected that the going away of the mistress, after the first shock, would be a wonderful ease and comfort to him: why not? —and to poor Miss Helen; but to see him struck away, as if by a thunderboult, from all care for what was hurrying over him, was mighty quare. From all he heard in the City, he didn't know to-night before to-morrow but the dear gentleman would be arrested, though he (Jerry) would take care that those who laid a finger on him should have a skinful of sore bones." And so he talked, poor fellow! until advancing close up to my little work-table, he took from his pocket a very dark, dirty-looking bag, apparently made out of an old gaiter, and holding it up before me, said, "That's the value of my hanging!"

I could not understand him.

"It's as much as my neck has been worth, lady dear, going on two years; and a sore trial I had of it. It's the brown cob, ma'am, is in it—the brown cob!—the darling whose coat shone like a *Delhamassy*, equal to eighteen stone, sound in wind and limb, safe to

ride or drive, rising seven, and never down once. I could'nt bear the notion of his going out of the family, particular to them who war to buy him; and the money not going into the master's pocket itself, only to them blackguard—I ax your pardon for the word—them blackguard crediturs that had enough, and too much before; and, sure, I hope that, seeing the way master was looked up to by everybody, that it would hould on, and that he would be upheld by those who spoke so well of him, and that he'd be soon wanting the brown cob again, and me for his man; and, night after night, I kep' on drameing of our glories, and he riding the brown cob, fair and asy as ever, and me after him in a bran new livery, to the murdering jealousy of Mrs. Brevet-Major, and poor Miss Mary Ryland's face bameing with pleasure among the little plants in the windy to see us going by as usual; and so I thought, rather than the blackguard crediturs should have the poor animal, I'd just, fair and asy, steal him *on myself* out of the stable——"

"What! Jerry?" I exclaimed.

"Steal him on myself, that's *from* myself, seeing that I had the care of him, ma'am—you understand?" continued the Irishman, with the most unmoved countenance; "and so I did—put him with a friend of my own out to grass, where he's been ever since, as lazy as a lady, with nothing to do but divart himself gamucking about the marsh, without a shoe to his foot, or a bit in his mouth (barring the bit he ate), like any gentleman; and paid for him myself, in coorse—happy to do it; and all in the hope that when the master (God look down on him!) got a-top of the world again, I'd have been able to bring him the brown cob, that, after the nursing it had, would be ready and willing to break the neck of any man that mounted him. But that hope, like many another, is dead with poor Jerry now. And it was yesterday Miss Helen brought me some bits of goold, a thing for the neck, and her little watch, and bid me sell them for her, as she had no money; and bid me not *let on* for my life what she tould me; and when I asked her why she didn't ask you, ma'am, to lend her some, it would have done your heart good to

see the blood-red colour on her cheek, and the beautiful curl on her lip ; 'deed would it ! "

" The proud child ! " I murmured.

" 'Deed is she, just," replied Jerry, "as proud as a thorough-bred filly that never had bit in her mouth. And so I bethought me it would be better to sell it (the cob), when the money was so wanted for the master's own self ; and I went to where the poor animal was, and here he is—his own worth I mean—and I got the man's Bible-oath, that if I wanted him again I should have him at the same price I got for him this blessed day. And I only wish to know what I'm to do with the money ; the masther, for all the new sense he's got, isn't fit to be trusted with money, that's the truth, for it isn't money-sense that's come to him, only a sort of sharpness, and a looking back on his past life, which many can't bear, barring they're angels ; and though some have the memory of his past goodness warm round the bits of hearts the Lord has left them, yet there are others—frost-bitten fools!—squeezed out of poverty, that have no respect for a gentleman, no more than for any other man ; and I've no manner of

doubt, that some of them will be worrying the poor master one of these days, and I'd like to save up the money, so as to be at hand when wanted. It's too much to give to such a young lady as Miss Helen at onct, who ought only to have guinea by guinea, or two or three at most. God bless us!" he continued, after a thoughtful pause, "it requires bitter knowledge of the world to know how rightly to manage what manages the world itself." I quite agreed with Jerry upon the latter point, although I strongly condemned his proceedings.

I remember, after he was gone fancying that evening one of the longest of my life—*my life*, which, even at that time, I considered a fragment, deprived as I was, in the blossom of my years, of those nearer and dearer ties, which knit us so firmly to this world, and without which life would be always hard to endure; yet, happily for myself, though without a near relative during the last forty years of my existence, I have passed but few desolate hours. The ringing laugh which rushes in from my neighbour's dwelling, though I am ignorant of its cause, has pleasant music in it; the merry

chiming of the marriage-bells still makes me hope that no blight may come upon the happiness they proclaim; and, if care and disappointment must follow, there is, nevertheless, consolation in the thought, that they have not been doubled by anticipation: the very death-bell tells to me of the termination of a troubled race, and of the future, whose hopes and mercies are never absent from me.

I love the voices of children; and the birth of flowers, the song of birds, the floating insects in a sunbeam, the chirp of the grasshopper, the very wagging of a dog's tail, or the household purr of a contented cat—they all afford me pleasure; and then the abundant enjoyments to oneself that arise from being able to minister to the enjoyments of others. There can be no happiness in which there is no one to participate: the selfish can never be happy. Truly do I believe the only really unhappy in the great race of life are the unsympathizing. But I do not know how it was, that evening I felt a disinclination to be happy; I put consolation away from me; and—note the wickedness of such perverse-

ness—with the quaint dealing and mingling of right and wrong displayed by Jerry, affording such food for thought, see how strange it was that I should brood and weep as if there were no mercy in that heaven whence all mercy comes! The one dear portrait—my shrine of love and memory—looked, I thought, sadly at me; and, do what I would, I could not that night rid me of despondency. I sat musing and brooding, my hands helpless as an infant's, until I bethought me of some work I had promised a poor widow, and which Miss Ryland had prepared; but even that failed to interest me; I went to bed weeping, and with a heavy heart.

It was 'the shadow of a coming sorrow.' The next morning brought me a few agonized and agonizing lines from Florence. Her father was dangerously ill, her mother almost distracted; *that*, she was told to say, alone prevented their coming at once to town. Mrs. Middleton added as a postscript, that her dear husband wished me to do what I considered best, and that he would be responsible for all I did; and desiring tenderest affection to her

brother and Helen. Florence also promised to write the next day. I dressed, and went down to Violet-cottage: the gate was open, the door had evidently not been unfastened, nor the shutters taken down. I knocked again and again, but received no answer; the milk-man came also, and while I was questioning him, Jerry arrived. His changing colour, and his evident distress convinced me that he knew nothing of the mystery, which he at once endeavoured to solve by breaking open the door. There was no trace whatever, of either Mr. Lyndsey or of Helen! In less than an hour the servant appeared. Miss Helen, she said, had called her at four o'clock that morning, and sent her, before day-break, 'of a message' into the City. Her master was up, dressed, and writing: indeed, she did not think he had done more than pretend to go to bed; he accompanied her to the door, and she heard him bolt it on the inside. Although Miss Helen spoke to her in her usual voice, she knew she had been crying: to repeat her own expression, "there was a sob in her throat which she was unable to keep down." The

woman seemed to think the most vexatious part of the affair was, that she could neither find the place nor the person to whom the note was addressed, although her master had impressed upon her, in the strongest manner, the necessity for bringing him a reply to what, he said, was a matter of such haste and importance that he could not wait for Jerry's morning call. Jerry stated, that, after he had left me the previous evening, he took Miss Helen five pounds, returning her little watch, and making her believe that the chain and trinkets had produced so much. This he could easily do ; for she had no idea of the value of such matters, and did not doubt his word, but seemed so displeased that he had not also disposed of the watch, because her papa wanted money the next day, that Jerry, in defiance of his prudent resolve, said he would give her five pounds of his own money until he sold it, if that would do. Helen took the money at once ; but, although he wanted her to retain the watch, she proudly insisted on his keeping it : "Indeed," he added, "it's seldom she was one hour what she was the next ; but last

night she was unlike anything I have ever seen her before—so eager for money, yet so proud. What makes many humble made her high."

They had taken only a small portion of their wardrobe; and a line from Mr. Lyndsey directed that all his things should be sold, and everybody paid. Poor man!—'everybody!' When his senses were perfect, he was not, as I have said, "a good man of business," but he knew the value of money, and the value of things, and must have known that his personal property could not have been worth a hundred pounds—to pay three times that sum; this alone convinced me he was acting under some delusion, that his mind was completely shaken. Helen had one pet, a starling, which an accident had deprived of sight. The bird was full of freak and mischief, and called "Helen" as loudly and distinctly as bird could call. Before she quitted Violet-cottage, she had given it food and water, placed some of its favorite biscuit in its cup; and on her slate—the beloved slate, the scratched, rubbed, ink-stained slate, the depository of her thoughts, the companion of her pillow, and of her rambles—she

had written, in her most peculiar hand, "My bird and my slate for my dear 'NOBODY,' and my work-box for Mary Ryland, for love of her and her ballads." Bewildered as I was by the sudden and mysterious disappearance of Mr. Lyndsey and his daughter, I was touched to the heart by poor Jerry's distress. Without saying a word, he placed Helen's watch in my hand, and quitted the room. I commenced a note to Major Cobb, who had just returned from Devonshire, mentioning the circumstance, and asking his advice; before it was finished, Jerry returned, and put the purse I have already described on the table:

"Keep it ma'am," he said, while he was frequently obliged to pause to wipe away his tears; "keep it ma'am, dear, if you plase; maybe your having it will turn its luck; there's no knowing; it's their money. You may live to see them again, but I shan't; that's the way my drame came true—and the poor innocent animal gone for no good—for, if it hadn't been for that ten pounds, sure they must have been to the fore still. I ask your pardon, ma'am, but put it up, out of my sight

—for them; the strength laves me intirely when I look at it; and put it in your *left* hand pocket with your *right* hand: maybe crossing the right and left will turn the luck; it often does in a horse-shoe."

I folded my note for Major Cobb, and gave it to Jerry to deliver, but he still lingered, under pretence of wiping the starling's perch, and giving it more biscuit.

"I ask yer pardon, ma'am," he said at last, eyeing the scrawled-over slate which Helen had left; "I ask yer pardon, but is there no word to me?" There was not. "Well, wisha-oge! what right had a poor ould family slave like myself to expect it? It was a folly to think of it; but, if there had only been a good-bye, or a God bless you, Jerry, it would have been as good as a priest's blessing every time I thought of it. Well, praise be to the heavens! I am sure she does not forget me, for all that; and it's selfish and mighty mane intirely in me to be thinking of such a thing at such a time; only after I have taken the note to the Major, maybe your honour would be so good as to let me carry the bird to your house, that's all."

"Old Jerry!" exclaimed the starling.

"She taught it to say that," observed the faithful creature, struggling to suppress his tears; "she taught it to say that, and yet she never left a scrap on the slate to keep life in the ould follower of the family."

"Jerry," I said, "something more than the usual attachment, felt even in your warm-hearted and devoted country, by a servant for his master, binds you to Mr. Lyndsey."

"Why do you even the likes of that to me, lady?" he exclaimed. — "Sure I never gave you or any other the right to think that —only this much I'll let on now—and if ever I've the sorrow to see the sunshine or the dew-fall over their graves—maybe it's more I'll tell you than ever I'd tell any other crayshur upon the face of the earth. Only take this with you now—that Mr. Lyndsey (may the Lord look down upon him and his darlint child—God help them both)—Mr. Lyndsey has a right to my body and bones—such as they are, dead or alive!—the right to take me, or lave me—to have me while there's any good in me, to cast me from him, as the

live tree casts off the dead leaf to the winds of winter—and never see me more if he plases. And if I knew where to go, maybe I wouldn't follow his track through the world and be his born slave to the end of my days!—I'll go now, yer honour—for whatever I may feel, I have no more to say."

The good-natured Major had the art, like all good-natured people, of rousing every kindly feeling within his influenee. He went round and about in all directions, puffing and fussing, filled with real anxiety, and bitter regret that he had not been more alive to their circumstances; but though everyone was anxious, some from interested motives, others from a better feeling—no trace could be discovered of Mr. Lyndsey's whereabouts. A lady, whose delicate health entailed sleepless nights, had heard the hall-door of Violet-cottage shut-to twice—once before day-break, when the servant stated she had been sent out; and again about an hour afterwards. I had no doubt that Mr. Lyndsey's diseased state of mind had led to some wild project, which the active romance of Helen caught at; and no matter

what was her father's wish, she would have acted in accordance with it. It is impossible to imagine aught more devoted than had become her love for him, since their residence at Violet-cottage: it seemed as though the entire affection of her nature was poured out at his feet. Her mother complained, and with reason, that Helen cared only for her father, but she forgot that *she* had thrown her daughter's love from her; and with such a temperament as Helen's repulsed affection could only find refuge in hate; the more she shunned the one, the more closely she clung to the other, and yet her genius found sympathy from neither: her mother would not listen to her compositions, but simply called them 'rubbish;" and her father, though he appeared to listen, never really heard. The ease and grace with which she versified—the precocity of her mind—the originality of her thoughts—were unvalued; they were not comprehended, much less appreciated. Her fits of abstraction—her desire to be alone—were not understood by either parent, but they warred so completely with her mother's views and habits, who found fault

with everything and was content with nothing, that the misery of both was easily accounted for. Suddenly, and most painfully, the idea suggested itself to me that Helen herself, if she did not plan, rejoiced at, this concealment, thinking that it saved her from the rule of her aunt Middleton; and yet, if such had been the case, she had such faith in my secrecy, such perfect and entire confidence in my affection, that I thought, nay, (perplexed though I was) after the lapse of a few minutes, I believed, that Helen Lyndsey would have told me if such had been her desire.

CHAPTER IX.

"Thus star by star declines,
Till all are pass'd away,
As morning high and higher shines,
To pure and perfect day;
Nor sink those stars in empty night,—
They hide themselves in Heaven's own light."

MONTGOMERY.

SORROWS, like tears, come not singly! Another letter from Florence determined me to go at once to Little Hampton. Mr. Middleton had become worse; yet still Mrs. Middleton did not fail to manifest much anxiety for her brother, little knowing how completely he had bewildered us by his disappearance. Again the village was busied with surmises as to what had become of Mr. Lyndsey and his child.

Again the various dispositions of its inhabitants prompted to uncharitable or charitable conclusions. Again the Misses Saunders flaunted across the heath—up the hill and down the hill; calling at 'the Library' (that great news mart in every village), full of newly-discovered wants, to inquire for some by-gone book, or to ask the price of the month's 'Fashions,' as if it had not been marked on the cover; or to borrow a catalogue, or 'look at' some pencils; or buy a quarter of a quire of letter paper and two pens; but, in reality, to discover if there was any 'fresh news of the Lyndseys.' And there they generally met Mrs. Bruce and others, intent on the same errand: even poor Miss Ryland, wandered in to ask the price of a 'pricked pattern,' but really in the hope that she might gather some crumb of comfort to carry home to her helpless sister, who had long considered 'Miss Helen' as the most wonderful creature ever born into the world. Many sought out and questioned Jerry, so that the poor fellow was almost heart-broken, and in utter despair betook himself to the loft at

'Jack Straw's,' letting down the trap to prevent intrusion. The milk-man and the capless butchers' boys (those light infantry of traders), together with the sweeper, and as many servant maids as could run out without being missed for five minutes, clubbed together at some favourite corner to watch for the postman, hoping he might have a letter for 'somebody' from 'anybody;' but that functionary, aware of his own importance—albeit prone at times to gossipry—now waved his questioners away, resolved to gratify none—chagrined because he was as ignorant as themselves, and therefore assuming an air of propriety and reserve—an incorruptible demeanour, as one who should say—'Do you, any of you, fancy I shall reveal the secrets of the news-bag, even if I did know more than names and numbers?' Not a few shook their heads and said —'They foresaw it from the first;' 'What were people to expect?' 'A man, like a horse, who was down once, was sure to go down a second time;' 'Helen was so proud, too, and pride must have a fall—they were certain of that!' In fact, there was nothing so bad but

that some would have certified it; while the few who could discriminate, only saw a man of small mental power, bowed down by the suffering born of circumstances—a man of high probity, carried away by the torrent—gone down, after much struggling—a wreck amid the storm. Yet all agreed that his disappearance was very extraordinary, and his wife's conduct, deserting him, as she did, at the moment when her counsel and countenance—when her love and loving duty—were most needed, past all telling despicable. There seemed to be an unanimous intention, on the part of the lower order, to 'mob' her, if they caught her; while the higher—or, more properly speaking, those of the higher—who expressed an opinion, determined to 'cut' her, as if they had not previously done so.

It was the first time in my life I anticipated a journey into Sussex, with a heavy heart. I reproached myself with thinking so much more of Helen than I did of my friends, to whom I was bound by every bond of love and gratitude; but Helen had the power of creating and concentrating an interest, more intensely

painful than that I ever felt for any other living creature. She was the first and last I thought of in my prayers. I listened, after the ringing of the gate-bell, thinking it might be followed by her voice; and whenever a hand rested gently on the handle of the door, I fancied I should see her enter. The starling kept continually calling—'Helen, dear Helen! Jerry—poor Jerry!' Major Cobb, too, was constantly looking in, with often-repeated enquiries and perpetual surmises of no use or importance; for, although a kind-hearted man and a brave soldier, he had very little sense. Yet there was no one who so fully sympathised with me as he did; and, in his anxiety to discover the fugitives, he was actuated solely by a desire to seek and to save. I do not know how poor Jerry heard of my intended departure for Little Hampton, but he came to me in the twilight, his jacket powdered with hay-seed, and his top-boots, which he always wore, wrinkling down his thin limbs, and covered with dust. He had moreover a sleepy, inert look; the poor fellow only wanted to know if I had any objection to let him have

the starling to take care of while I went to the country—it would be such 'fine company for him,'—"lift the throuble off his heart,"—"keep him employed," and so forth: and great indeed was his delight when I said, that if I permitted him to take care of the starling, in return he was to take care of my cottage.

My cook did not like this much, but knew that I seldom changed my mind or my arrangements. Up to the hour of my departure, I hoped that some intelligence might be received from Helen. Mrs. Lyndsey wrote to me twice; they might be called 'necessity letters,' commencing with inquiries as to her husband and child, and then falling into a wail about herself—herself—her perpetual and most uninteresting self! I said that another letter from Florence determined me to go to Hampton-lodge, but it required another and still more painful one before I put my determination into action, and really departed

When Florence threw herself into my arms, and concealed her weeping face on my shoulder, I could hardly imagine it possible that in so short a time, as it seemed to me,

that child had also grown into a woman; and when, after a few moments, I held her from me to be assured of her identity, and saw the blending of patience and gentleness in her face, the success of the struggle to regain composure, and the self-possession and dignity of her manner, I almost envied Mrs. Middleton the possession of such a child. My beloved friend! the joy of our meeting flushed *her* cheek; and yet weeks of anxiety did not appear to have impaired her strength. "I shall have you now to watch with me," she said; "I shall have *you* now. Poor Florence is unequal to the exertion, though she seems to have an intuitive knowledge of all necessary cares and duties." And then she entered upon the one engrossing subject of her thoughts—her husband's illness, with its alternations of hopes and fears.

When I saw Mr. Middleton, I confess I put every hope afar from me; I could cherish none connected with this world for the ghastly skeleton of the once strong and healthful man. But, though changed in person, his mind was as clear, as lucid, and certainly as cheerful as I

had ever remembered it; it seemed to me wonderful how words of such ample contentment could proceed from any living creature in such a state of suffering; but it was the triumph of the well-conditioned and soundly disciplined mind over the worn-out body.

What a season of care it was!—care for him, the loved, the honoured, the cherished husband and father. And his friends and humble neighbours, how they crowded day after day,—day after day, noiselessly, but constantly—up the avenue, or lingered at the gate, waiting the doctor's departure, watching in the shrubbery, waylaying the servants, and turning silently aside if the sad reply of "Much the same," was all they received in answer to their eager and hopeful questions. I saw Mrs. Middleton going through the most arduous duties—sitting up night after night—seeing every one—caring for all things; at one hour thrown into a delirium of joy by a change for the better, so trifling that even her dearest friends could hardly perceive it, and then cast back into the deepest despair by a falter in his voice, or a sigh drawn from his chest with

greater heaviness than usual. It was distressing past all telling to watch her when the time for the doctor's visits approached.

The back drawing-room window overlooked the road, and there she would station herself an hour perhaps before his expected arrival. At every shadow cast by a passing cloud, every echo of carriage-wheels, or sound of a galloping horse, she would change colour, look at the watch, which in her nervousness, she unhooked from her side, and then replace it, murmuring, "Will he never come? Must this go on for ever?" Then she would, at my entreaty, seat herself, saying, with a faint smile, 'She was determined to wait with patience.' What patience it was, those only who witnessed it could describe. She would sit down certainly, fix her feet firmly on the carpet, twine her fingers closely together, and compress her lips—while her eyes and ears were all observance; straining her sight towards the window, and listening until she started at every sound:—enduring ten times more than when in motion, for it seemed that motion disquieted her anxiety. One of the physicians

said to me, after a very prolonged visit to his patient, "I wish that Mrs. Middleton did not look as she does; I can reply to her questions, clothed, as they are, in a hundred different forms, all meaning the same thing; but her eyes penetrate into my very soul: there is something painfully unnatural in their gaze. I hope her mind will bear up against this dangerous excitement."

I replied—She was very well—that I believed her to be very well; that she said she never felt fatigue, or want of rest, or even repose.

He answered, that was not natural—could not last; and added, he thought, as I was so evidently her friend, and one whom everybody trusted, he did not mind saying to me that he was very uneasy about her, and, if she were not tranquillized, he feared that in a little time she would be incapable of attending to her husband, or to anything else.

I did not, of course, tell him so, but I certainly thought him an alarmist—one of those who have pleasure in creating terrors they cannot soothe. A day or two after this, when

Mrs. Middleton sprang, rather than walked, into the room, I was deceived by the brightness of her colour, the expression of her smile, the earnestness and facility of her words. She was animated by a new-found hope; symptoms of a favourable nature had appeared, and were to be worked upon; both the physicians thought her husband better.

She repeated this a score of times, and clasped Florence to her bosom, falling at last into a passion of tears, so wild and extravagant, that, when they subsided, I repeated all the observations which, an hour before, I had scorned, entreating her to 'keep quiet,' to 'be calm,' to 'curb her feelings.' Still, I was not at all alarmed for her at the time, though I feared the re-action, if, unfortunately, Mr. Middleton should become worse. I implored her again and again to keep quiet, to remember how much depended on herself.

She laughed at me in her old spirit, repeating, "Quiet, quiet! What is it? What can it be—the quiet so allied to insensibility, that would think of itself when such as Middleton is in danger? Quiet! friend of mine, I have

been quiet. Nights and nights, when there was no hope, when the physician departed, expecting, the next morning, to find God's light shut out from the tombed house—all that time I was quiet—quiet as you could wish—in the body. I sat quietly by his bed-side for hours, without thought of motion. I could not have shut my eyes if I would; my eyelids were rigid as marble—*that* was quiet. I could not remove my eyes from him—they were quiet! You could not hear me breathe. Florence, poor child! has come in, and felt my cheeks with her warm lips, to learn if I were really alive; and yet I seemed to see and hear all things, not as I had ever done before, but *intuitively*—I was all eyes and ears for him. Oh! I can be quiet, but why should I be so now? Never had I more need of life!—all life's purposes! all that we live for, all that renders life desirable are again gathering round me fresh, bright, glorious, for he will live! My life revives!—yes, now I know it—I feel it—I am sure of it! My child will not have to enter the world fatherless—with only a mother's care—and such a father!"

More than once, while she was speaking, I thought her words were wild, and yet, when I remembered her nature, there was nothing extraordinary in her enthusiasm: it was *natural* to her—her nature. One moment I sympathized with all she said; the next, I almost trembled at what I could hardly understand. I watched her every movement, with eyes rendered anxious by affection. The varied tones of her delicious voice penetrated my very heart. I saw length of days in her firm and buoyant step, and proud, elastic bearing. "For her," I said in my heart, "is the treasury of a long life." It would be long ere death could overcome such a frame, or palsy such limbs, or dry up the well-springs of such a heart. How could she die!—she, the life of lives? I cast all anxiety for the wife far from me, as weak and discomforting, and my thoughts reverted to the husband. All that night and all next day he continued to improve. Mrs. Middleton became, if possible, more excited; she rushed up and down stairs, doing everything herself; she talked unceasingly; she flew to her harp while her husband

slept, and, in her sweet, low voice, sung over song after song—*his* favourites — to get, as she said, her voice in order against his recovery. When we met for the holy and hallowing purpose of family prayer, she poured forth her gratitude to God, in a strain of love and thankfulness which I never heard equalled: it was a loving, humble, but most exalted offering—her voice now full, now plaintive, so melodious in all its tones; and yet, more than once, through that evening prayer, I observed Florence look up and gaze at her mother, whose hands were clasped, and whose face, bright as the face of an angel, was as eloquent as her words were powerful.

The physician came to us that evening, and Mrs. Middleton flew upstairs to prepare her husband for his visit.

"Her excitement, I perceive, still continues," he said, approaching the table on which the Bible had been placed. "She is worse than I have seen her yet. It is very strange that you do not perceive it."

"I do think she is more excited than she is in general," I answered, coldly; "she is naturally

anxious, and this new-found hope elevates her more than usual."

The old man smiled. The 'faculty' have a conventional sort of smile, not at all pleasant to observe; it lowers our self-esteem.

"You have not been used to the various phases of—excitement," he replied, but paused before the word 'excitement,' as if some idea of more painful import than that word conveys had occurred to him.

What an age of suffering passed through my heart at that moment; I trembled like an aspen leaf.

"If she could only be kept quiet ——" Before the sentence was finished, Mrs. Middleton was in the room again—pale, haggard, staggering. She grasped the doctor's arm. "He is worse, much worse," she murmured, wildly; "worse within the last ten minutes. Save him—save him, if you value your life!'

The physician was a small withered man, gathered together and dried up, with little to indicate existence, except his most brilliant eyes; he fixed those upon her, saying—"Be calm; he must fluctuate." He gave me an

expressive look, and, taking one of the candles off the table, went up stairs. To my great astonishment, Mrs. Middleton did not attempt to follow him; she remained panting and glaring, repeating—"And, after all, he will die; after all he will die—die!" It was months before the wail of these words ceased to ring in my ears, or her face, changed in a few moments from its beamy brightness, its ecstatic look, to one of such utter despair, passed from before me.

Florence entered before Doctor Leslie could have entered her father's room. She placed her mother in a chair, rang the bell for some water, and said—"You have agitated yourself needlessly, dear mother. It was the position of the lamp that threw such a shadow on my father's face."

The answer to this was a loud ringing laugh —I never heard so sad a laugh before or since.

Florence became pale as marble, but perfectly self-possessed. Whether Doctor Leslie heard the laugh or not, I cannot tell, but he was by her side in a moment. Mrs. Middle-

tion had risen, casting, as it were, her former self away. She continued that fearful laughter, tossing her arms in the air wildly. The doctor seized her hand : —

"Do you know," he said, "that you will awake your husband—who sleeps?" Poor thing! the loving chord of her heart was struck.

She shrunk down upon her seat, drawing herself away from the physician, and putting her finger on her lip, as she used to do when a child. She looked round, murmuring, "Hush, hush!" I have not even now the power to detail what followed, nor do I see why I ought to do so ; what good would it do to me or to others, to recal the ravings of that frightful disease, born, as it was, of over love, brought on by anxiety and watching—throbbing in her aching brain, and consuming her heart by a devouring fever? This shipwreck of a gallant nature—of beauty, and bravery, and steadfastness—this crushing of human glory! the destruction of all but enfeebled life, the quenching of the lamp in which we trust to light us to our journey's end, this separating

of body and mind! Alas! it is dreadful to dwell upon, even now; but when I recalled not only her *nights*, but weeks of sleeplessness, her watching, and talking, and writing, her unrest in all things, I only wondered how I could have been blind to the result. I reproached myself for the little care, the little thought I had bestowed upon one I so dearly loved. "I had," I said, "never been deceived by the favourable symptoms in which my poor friend exulted;" I thought from the first moment that HE was doomed, and never dreamt that SHE, the bright, lifesome creature, abounding in existence, prodigal of strength, of thought, of feeling for others—the spirit, the mind, the essence of all good—could have fallen as she did fall, in what to me seemed a few brief hours. Mr. Middleton had undergone no change for the worse; it was her imagination, blasted into insanity by the position of the light, which fell in a peculiar way upon his features! The train had been preparing for some time; this single spark set it on fire.

It was then that the noble, firm, self-supporting nature of Florence came forth; the

quiet, thoughtful girl was transformed into the resolved woman. Her mother's state could not be concealed from her father; indeed, Florence, so truthful was her nature, would have found it very difficult to have concealed anything. And this was one of the great points of difference in the characters of the two cousins; Helen delighted in the mystery and excitement of concealment, Florence revelled in the frank and open truth.

How impossible it is to judge of the balance —the mysterious balance—between life and death! In less than three weeks my beloved friend was taken from us; they said her brain became paralyzed. Certainly the last few days of her life were tranquil; so tranquil, that we were permitted to sit by her side, to moisten her lips, and perform those offices of love which it is grievous to intrust to any whose hearts are not bound to the sufferer by the tenderest of all earthly ties. Long before this, I had said to Florence, "This will kill your father;" and she answered, "She thought it would save him." It is quite impossible to determine how far the sympathy between mind

and body extends—where it ends, or where commences; but it was extraordinary how Mr. Middleton rallied; how, while bending as a Christian bends to the will of the Almighty, he strengthened himself for the sake of his child—that beloved child who was now his world—and whose future was to become the sole object of his solicitude. It was mournful to see only the shadow of his form when he rose from his bed; but he *did* arise from it; while she, whose anxiety on his account had worked out the fatal malady that consumed, and then wrecked her existence, departed from among us. Well may we repeat: "Lord, the issues of life and death are in thy hand!"

Sorrow is a great teacher! and the crumbling away of earthly tabernacles serves to build up our homes in heaven!—the light comes out of darkness! When this earthly lamp was extinguished, and I had no power to rekindle, or to garnish it—it was a joy born of Mercy, to *believe* then, as it had been graciously given me frequently to do, that he who cared for *her*, as well as for *us*, was great in

wisdom, as in mercy—if this faith ever wavered, I had recourse to prayer, and that never failed to comfort and elevate my spirit.

CHAPTER X.

'Forlorn! the very word is like a bell,
To toll me back from thee to my sole self;
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is forced to do, deceiving elf.

KEATS.

MR. MIDDLETON could not remain near the scene of his former happiness; he determined, after some hesitation, to reside in the neighbourhood of London, excusing the movement to others and himself, by saying that Florence now required the assistance of the best masters to complete an education so well commenced. No man likes to admit he is without strength of mind to endure contact with the inanimate things that remind him continually

of the past—that recal palpably, what mentally he can never forget. First he tried my neighbourhood, but that would not do; he traced an imaginary resemblance between Hampstead-heath and the downs at Little Hampton. Then he took a house for a few weeks at Chelsea. The mild air did not 'brace' him at all; and the fine old stately houses, so replete with memories of the past, he fancied increased his melancholy. Florence regretted leaving Chelsea; the inhabitants of the old Hospital rendered her walks interesting; while her father saw in them only men trembling on the verge of the grave, she beheld the heroes of the old wars, every line upon whose brows was a record of victory, and every wound a stamp of England's glory.

The young are curious in matters of age and death, while they who feel within their own tottering or sinking frames the approach of what, however mysterious, is the one reality of our existence, shun, rather than seek, any contact with those who are hastening on the same road.

The deep sorrow which Florence had en-

dured added years to her knowledge; but hers was a most beautiful mingling of simplicity and wisdom. The memory of her mother was entwined with the faith, and love, and trust, which such a mother was certain to inspire; she joyed to recall all she could remember, from the first prayer she learned, when, a little lisping child, she clung to her knee, to the last song they sung together.

She delighted to talk to me of this mother; a stranger would have imagined that mother to be still in life, so earnestly would she say—"I wonder would mamma like this?"—or, "How much I should wish to know if mamma would approve of that!" It seemed as though her mother were always present with her—as if a communion of the purest kind were carried on between them, which nothing could sever. You would hardly have supposed they even inhabited different countries. Florence would occasionally say to me, with her full, yet melancholy smile, "I have been thinking that over with mamma," and then recalling what I knew she would have said: but she never even alluded to her mother before her father. He

had put away a portrait, painted by Lawrence in the dawn of his early fame, during the first year of Mrs. Middleton's wedded life; nor did Florence let him see the miniature of her beloved parent, which was to her as a companion—a friend—a treasure past all telling. This was their only restraint; but to Florence it was a sad one; whenever we met, she poured forth her soul in love and memory, dwelling on the past, and arranging for the future, in full confidence that her mother's friend must be her friend. Whatever her mother might have wished to be done, she joyed to do.

After he left Chelsea, Mr. Middleton tried Kensington; but that, he soon said, was too courtly. Then Clapham—Norwood—Fulham—these were all abandoned after a month or two: at last he took a house in one of the streets leading out of Park-lane, and seemed resolved to indulge his restlessness by furnishing it. People at that time were very fond of having a house furnished in what was called *en suite;* that is, chair matched chair, and table table—all seemed of the same family; but he

anticipated a later fashion, and grouped rather than classed his furniture, so that his visitors hardly knew what to make of it; and what they could not quite understand, they set down (so as to save all mental trouble of comprehension or inquiry) to eccentricity.

He also forced himself to go into society; and by degrees his house became noted as a rendezvous of learned and accomplished persons. He did not 'see company' in an expensive way, never inviting more than ten persons to dinner at a time, but classing these with such exceeding good taste and tact, that all appeared to feel an inclination to please aud gratify others rather than to exhibit themselves. He always avoided men, no matter what their rank or abilities might be, who rode their hobbies in company. He never permitted the meeting of rival diners out;—one at a time of practical men of this description was quite enough to secure a few racy and piquant anecdotes, the last *bon mot* of the clubs, and the chit-chat which renders so perfect the mosaic of good society. It was not so much the dinner as the men—I say this, because

a dinner, being good of its kind, well dressed and well served, is a wonderful stimulant to good humour and even wit. An Englishman—and, indeed, every man—is always more inclined to think well, and speak well of things in general, when he is on good terms either with his own or his host's cook. While Mr. Middleton avoided having all of one class of men, he never introduced persons who were likely to jar or clash with each other; however vain the man of letters may be of his last essay or article, he is not likely to have his self-esteem depressed by the diplomatist; the poet can amalgamate with the philosopher, for each respects the other; the musician may *feel* the eulogy he expresses when he speaks of the painter's skill, and the historical painter warm in the praise he bestows upon the creative mind of a great architect; there is no rivalry in this. I have always observed that rivalry elicits sparks, which are pretty certain to end in fire; I never knew many persons of the same calling meet together, who did not separate with a certain soreness in which the host was implicated, although it originated in small jealousies,

which, if taxed with, they would be ashamed to confess. It is not only poor women, who, however greatly they admire abstract excellence in each other, do not much care to see it shining forth in the blaze of beauty and popularity—it is not only poor half-educated women, I say, who are jealous of each other—I could tell such stories, minute, as well as enlarged, of the envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness of the other sex, as would draw down upon me the thunders of their wrath: but it is no pleasure to me to tell such tales, unless I am moved thereto by some object more worthy than the recording of evil for the mere sake of the doing so.

These social meetings were not confined to gentlemen; the *chaperone* whom Mr. Middleton had selected for his daughter might safely be pronounced 'old,' despite the extent of the patent which the fair sex take out for perpetual youth; but Mrs. Dellamere was de-decidedly 'old'—dressed old—thought old thoughts; while the high polish of old-fashioned manners dignified her words and acts. It was impossible for the most scandal-loving

person to say that Mr. Middleton was going to marry his daughter's governess; for the lady was old enough to be his mother, and there was none of the silly assumption of youth in the high, close, black silk dress, and the perfectly white hair frizzed round a brow that had been wrinkled by much bravely-endured sorrow. Mrs. Dellamere and I were great friends; she netted while I knitted; we taught each other our new stitches, and measured our work to see who had done most. And it was impossible not to be amused by the old-fashioned stateliness of her deportment, while you respected her high principles, and her devotion to her 'young lady.' Florence listened and observed; and her father never failed to question her the next morning on the topics that had been discussed at their last *réunion;* thus she learned mentally to feed upon society, and was also expected in the evening to contribute her quota of amusement by playing on her harp and singing. Still, Florence wanted a companion, not so much for her feelings and affections as for her tastes; she knew many young ladies, but she

was so thoroughly English in her mode of forming intimacies, that the acquaintance evaporated before anything approaching to intimacy commenced. Frequently she would revert to her cousin Helen, of whom we had discovered no trace, despite the efforts we made to learn where she was concealed, or how she and her father were supported. For some time I continued to hear from Mrs. Lyndsey, receiving strangely written letters, full of complaining words, and ill-arranged sentences. Then the correspondence ceased altogether, and I *heard* of her only. Some absurd story, or outburst of extravagance, would come to my knowledge; but no token of any kind did I receive from the one I loved so dearly.

Florence would long for this unknown cousin, and endeavour to induce Jerry (who for some time, had been a supernumerary of the establishment, and came and went according to his own pleasure), to speak of his "darling Miss Helen!" but the poor fellow had ceased to be eloquent on the subject—an autumnal tint of what might have been 'rosy red,' would flush his cheek; his voice in reply become tremulous, and his eyes fill with tears, as he

turned away, muttering, "Don't talk to me, if it's plasing to you at all—I don't like it—I can't stand it! I've nothing to say—only—God bless her!"

The miniature world at Hampstead, divided as it was into gossips wholesale and retail—persons who talked and persons who listened—had ceased to remember 'the Lyndseys.' The houses they had inhabited, both on the Heath and on the hill side, passed into other hands—changed tenants, it might be, half a dozen times. The lame dressmaker and her sister were still in the same cottage, and their poor mother in the same state of suffering and silence; the Cobbs were there also, and Mrs. Major Cobb's dresses were as young in their form and material as heretofore, though certainly the lady was changed. She strode on as manfully as ever; but her head was bent, and the feather pennon floated three inches lower than of old. Her hatred against pretty faces had become a positive disease, and was so well known, that no servant, with tolerably good looks, ever ventured to solicit a situation in *her* house. She talked loudly of being tired

of the peace establishment, and of her determination soon to go on active service. She once stormed the Horse-Guards to inquire why Brevet-Major Cobb was not 'made full,' as *their* services demanded it. The Commander-in-Chief said she ought to be cashiered; and a lot of the clerks came to Hampstead Heath two following Sundays to have a good look at her. The major said, if he had known it at the time, he would have given them in charge; but Mrs. Brevet-Major took it as a compliment, drew her lips over her great teeth into a simper, and then showed them in full drill by a smile—hung her head on one side, blush-fashion, and crossed her feather-pennon over her face to conceal it: then tossing it playfully away with a loud 'ha, ha!' which sounded like the laugh of a strong-bodied laundress, she called the panting major 'a dear naughty child for being at his old tricks again—jealous!—jealous of those sweet Horse-Guard boys, as he was of the Rajah Singadrabad long ago. If he were inclined to do what he ought to do, he would ask those recruits to the mess—she always called dinner

'mess'—"nothing was to be done without interest: and one of the dear fellows she knew was nephew by marriage to the secretary-at-war; would he be a dear lovee, and take her advice?" The major only 'pished!' and 'stuffed!' and puffed, and evinced a belief that she had made them both ridiculous; while, forgetting the sentimental, she declared it was a sad thing when a delicate woman was obliged to unsex herself to get her husband on in the world. The little major had grown shorter within the last few years; but people do not feel the change which others see, or, if they do, will not admit it. The Misses Saunders still apostrophized the Vale of Health as the loveliest valley in England, although the eldest had been sadly afflicted with rheumatism, and the youngest, it was suspected, suffered from the *realty* of the disease, although she still wore transparent dresses of clear muslin in frost and snow. But these people, and others too numerous or too insignificant to enumerate, had forgotten all about 'the Lyndseys!'—one wonder hounds another out of the memory of the public! The dressmaker, indeed, never

'did up' my bonnet, or fitted on a dress, without inquiring if I ever heard anything of Miss Helen—'dear Miss Helen!' but she was the only exception, unless I instance that once, when Florence was spending the day with me, she expressed a desire to see the house on the Heath where 'Cousin Helen' had lived; and, as we walked there, we met Miss Saunders. Florence had become a very distinguished-looking girl, and it was her father's pleasure to dress her richly; her appearance and manner attracted my curious neighbour at once, and when I mentioned that my young friend was Miss Helen Lyndsey's cousin, she got up an extemporaneous sort of interest about her immediately, which at first attracted Florence's kindly feelings. After sounding Miss Middleton to discover how she felt towards 'the interesting runaway,' she expressed her pleasure at finding that they thought exactly alike; that Helen always was a very clever, engaging—in short, a highly interesting little girl; and that she always *fought her battles.*

"Fought her battles!" repeated Florence,

who was by no means quick at catching an idea, or in reading a character, but most firm and straightforward in defending one; "what battles could a young girl like her have to fight? neither my uncle's faults nor misfortunes are to be attributed to his child!" Miss Saunders looked astonished: it had never entered into her philosophy publicly to acknowledge a relative who had been once unfortunate; yet here was Miss Middleton speaking of her poor, half-crazed runaway uncle without reserve or change of countenance, as if he had been an earl. Miss Saunders had not sufficient honesty in her own composition to credit that Florence was really honest in responding to the praise she bestowed upon 'clever little Helen Lyndsey;' and such was the character of her own mind, that she believed some good fortune must, after all, have come to 'the Lyndseys,' otherwise that very 'stylish' girl, Miss Middleton—an heiress, it was said—would hardly have become so animated in her defence!

This is a very common way of thinking with narrow-minded persons; who imagine there

must be an under-current of selfishness beneath every noble or even kindly opinion that one human being expresses of another. Such folks are incapable of taking a broad view of anything; they would look at the Andes through a microscope, and count the beatings of a dying pulse from mere curiosity. In fact, Miss Saunders was perplexed; she was anxious to please Florence, because she was well dressed, and had, as I have said, the reputation of being rich. After a few moments, during which she walked in silence by my side, she took refuge in the last gossip news of the village; floundered amid sundry observations of the ordinary uncharitable kind; and, after describing Mrs. Cobb's new dinner-service, of the elephant pattern (with silver covers, which she had her own 'doubts' were plated), annoyed, perhaps, by the little interest we took in the 'nothings' which ill nature turned into 'somethings,' she bade us good-morning.

"It is no wonder Aunt Lyndsey's mind was so narrow, and her temper so acid, if such were her associates," said Florence. "I really

think both temper and taste must be injured by contact with such persons. I felt inclined to like her after the first sentence, despite her manner, but was obliged to fall back upon the impression she gave me before she spoke. How different from the poor dressmaker, whose tears bore witness to her remembrance of 'such kind customers!'"

"Yes," I said; "and yet the poor dressmaker might have been forgiven if she had made no inquiry; for one injury often, I regret to say, effaces the memory of numberless obligations."

"What injury did she receive?" inquired Florence, anxiously?—"What injury could she have received from them?"

"When people are distressed," I replied, "they cease in many instances to be punctual paymasters; and I know that when Mrs. Lyndsey left Hampstead, she owed poor Miss Ryland an account."

Florence's cheek flushed, and we walked on in silence until we stood opposite the house. It had just (according to the phrase) been 'done up,' and its glare and white-faced

cleanliness jarred upon the little history we attached to it; it should have had, we thought, a sober and retiring look. We sat beneath the shadow of one of those Alpine trees, and looked towards the distant scene of mighty London, over which a huge pall of mystery floats by night and day; we could hear no sound of the rolling thunder that resounds through its streets; but there it rested, enshrouded in a semi-transparent cloud of its own creation; the dome of St. Paul's, or one of the towers of our proud abbey, or a holy spire, bursting forth occasionally, and catching the light, and then disappearing, while some other object became touched by the same magic influence, and issued into sight, as the steam of clouds and smoke broke into fragmemts of dense vapour; all being suggestive, as the far-off view of a large city even is, of reflections that crowd the imagination, and gather the past, and present them into one grand whole.

Florence gazed upon the scene until her eyes filled with tears, and it was long before she spoke; and when she did, it was to re-

quest that we might walk to Miss Ryland's. We did so, and saw the pale, earnest face of the lame sister bending in the window, over a clump of sickly-looking primroses which seemed to have been recently transplanted from the more genial bank—

"Whereon the wild thyme blows,"

to the earthenware enclosure, contrasted me sadly with the broad green leaves of the country plant. The flowers had drooped, and the poor girl was propping them up by various little artifices, training the leaves to support them, and putting a stick in here and there to catch the blossoms; but they would droop for all her pains, and when she raised her eyes from her half-pleasing, half-painful, task, she saw we were observing her. I had not questioned Florence as to the object of her visit, but I conjectured rightly. After a few questions, my young friend mentioned her cousin, and something in the kindly tone of her gentle voice at once led the dressmakers to launch forth in praise of Helen. The poor lame girl repeated with flushed cheek various bits of poetry which she remembered 'the dear young

lady ' writing, as she sat on a little stool, while waiting for some alteration or addition to a frock or a bonnet. Florence managed with the tact of a delicate mind—a tact which can never be taught—to inquire as to Mrs. Lyndsey's debt to them, while I was wondering how she would accomplish it: and the reply astonished us both. They exclaimed together, that Mrs. Lyndsey owed them nothing. I was amazed, for Miss Ryland had spoken of the debt to me; and I had asked more than once, afterwards, if she ever heard from Mrs. Lyndsey? and the reply had been "no." I now said on the subject I was not aware they had received any communication from Mrs. Lyndsey, and the eldest said, "Nor have we!" Upon which the lame sister looked reproachfully at her, as much as to say, 'Surely you will not tell!'

"If you have not heard from Mrs. Lyndsey," said Florence," how can you have received the amount of your account?"

Neither replied to the question until it was repeated.

"It is some time since," said Miss Ryland, at last; "and although my sister seems angry,

I cannot see any harm in telling the fact. It is greatly to Miss Helen's honour, I am sure, and if I did not mention it to you, ma'am, at once, it was simply because I was told *not* to mention to any one that I had heard from her. At three different periods we received money from Miss Helen, which paid our account in full, and she commanded us to destroy the letters, which we did honourably." The hope that brightened Florence's face faded. "Was there no residence—no date?" she inquired.

"A date, but no residence," she said.

"And the post-mark?"

"Went into the fire," replied the dress-maker in an unconscious, innocent tone, that made me smile.

"She's a fine creature!" exclaimed Florence, "but, for all that, she must not deprive me of the pleasure I anticipated;" and she forced her purse into the lame girl's hand.

"It was so noble of her not to forget us; and then, a young lady like her to have writen so meek an apology fordividing the acconnt, when we never dreamed of receiving it at all; I often fancy she has been as considerate to

others. May God bless her!" added Miss Ryland, as she turned away to conceal her tears—·· may God always bless her?"

This little incident afforded me the warmest pleasure, while it involved me in much perplexity. I made it my business to inquire in various quarters, and from several persons, and found that in other instances Helen had remitted small sums of money to those o whom her father had been indebted, enjoining a secrecy which, in many instances, was needless; for persons are more apt to talk of what they lose, than what either justice or benevolence bestows.

Neither Mr. Middleton nor myself could form the least idea as to how this money was obtained. We could not for a moment suppose that Mr. Lyndsey's indolent habits had been conquered, and, that he was making a fortune or even enough to maintain himself and his child. Mrs. Lyndsey never mentioned her husband or daughter except when all other sources of lamentation failed;—then, indeed, she poured forth her complaints at their want of nature, at their ingratitude, at their abandonment, quite

forgetting that it was *she* who had left *them!* —and that during a period of bitter sorrow and trial! Still she had made up her mind that she was a victim, that she was a forsaken! and so, from all we heard, she drooped her beflowered head over her amber silk, and endeavoured to impress all who came within her sphere with the belief, that she had been most hardly treated by an ungrateful husband and a more ungrateful child. Her means were limited; and her selfishness prevented the supposition that she would bestow a farthing wherever she could avoid it. How, then, Helen had found means to act as she had done, we were all perplexed to discover; still, I must say, in justice to my own penetration, that—I had my suspicions.

About a month after our interview with the Rylands, I was dining out; the party was one of those monster dinners that set you wondering how all the things can be got together, and brought in order upon a table; while the trained machinery of hands and arms outstretched and active, placing and replacing, the unheard footsteps and moveless counte-

nances of the servants, would lead to the belief that you are waited upon by automata, but that you have a certain conviction that such silent living creatures must of necessity be very observant, and you are even led to speculate upon what they will say, when freed from restraint, and at perfect liberty in those unexplored 'basements,' where they congregate. The dinner was on the whole very stupid; that is, as far as general conversation went. Small dinners are usually devoted to *cliques*, and woe to the occasional intruder into the eight-or-ten-*clique*—dramatic, literary, or artistic. A word or two may, by courtesy, be addressed to the stranger, but the jests, the conversation, the stories, are all so conventional as to be almost unintelligible to any but 'the privileged.' The duets and trios of a large dinner party, however discordant they may sometimes be, are preferable to the 'talk' of a small *clique* dinner. I have no reason to complain of either; I never wish to contradict, to interfere, or to sparkle. I always find plenty to interest and amuse in the people; a train of thought which, even as the grain of mustard seed grows into a

tree, arises out of I hardly know what, and goes on perpetually increasing. On my left was seated a semi-blue—an awful woman, who had written a little and talked a great deal about it. She had a huge *prononcée* nose, which lorded it over the other features, a quantity of faded flaxen hair in flowing ringlets, around a face of massive proportions, a mouth, made for containing a great deal at once, and which did not shrink from its destiny, and a profusion of bright pink ribbands in this flaxen hair—a woman of fifty with flaxen ringlets and bright pink ribbands! She had been a newspaper reviewer, and gave vent to sundry small bitternesses by way of wit; she had a most unfeminine talent for contradiction, and differed from everyone within her sphere, declaring she never read a book which became universally popular, because, as a free woman, she would not be led by the mass. Of course I shrunk into my usual 'Nobody,' beside this literary Amazon, who talked over my head, and across me, to the extent of flourishing her fork in my face. On my right was a showily-dressed, handsome man, magnificent

in chain, waistcoat, rings, pins, and a well-curled Brutus—the fashion of the time—which, in emulation of the Regent's wig, stood up and about, every hair staring its neighbour out of countenance. An old friend of mine used to say, such persons were invaluable in a large room, to dress the corners; at a dinner-table, it was a fatigue to look at him. The lady, my neighbour, quoted Byron (with whom she said she had *danced*) over a *fricandeau*, lisped a Latin phrase amid the soft confusion of a *soufflé*, and lectured upon the indelicacy of the anticipated long waists while coquetting with a salad. Now the chain and the Brutus, and all the component parts of my gentleman neighbour, took this very coolly; he seemed to think that permitting the lady to talk was paying her an indirect compliment, at all events, until he had finished his dinner; and she became proportionably excited at the idea of having established a conversation with the handsomest man at the table, particularly as the young lady at the other side was a very lovely girl, in the first bewitching blush of womanhood—such a creature as is rarely en-

countered at a dinner party. The secret was, that the gentleman would not fatigue himself by paying attention to anything until the dinner was over; and though, after looking twice at the pretty girl, he felt convinced she *was* pretty, still the other gave him less trouble, and his vanity (the vanity of a full-grown man is very extensive and determined) was soothed by attracting the attention of the most 'clever' woman in the room.

I could not help speculating how any unfortunate husband could manage such a woman in domestic life, and came to the conclusion that they ought to change garments. I was not at all surprised when I heard that this *clever* woman was separated from her husband, on the ground of "incompatibility of temper." I had been amused for some time by the lady's efforts and the gentleman's *nonchalance*, but they grew wearisome; and amid the din, I began counting how many wore turbans, and how many caps—peering phrenologically at heads, and catching the stray sentences and odds and ends of opinions, which are flung, kaleidoscope-fashion, across and around a din-

ner-table during the third course; and then some one word sent me wandering far away from the well-bred festival; and I leaned quietly back in my chair, until the lady, with a most unintellectual titter, intended as a preface to a witticism, turned the hot glory of her countenance upon me, and inquired "if I was counting the variety of sweetmeats in the epergne?" The dinner had given place to a tasteful dessert; fruits and flowers mingled amid the diamond glass and frosted silver; delicious perfumes ascended in light vapoury clouds to the ceiling; fairy bouquets floated like water nymphs in the finger-glasses; and the smiling hostess (whose taste in *féte* arrangements was perfection) was in the act of exchanging her sparkling flowers with a K.C.B., who found it difficult to discover an unadorned button-hole wherein to fix the favour, when my attention was absorbed by hearing a very calm, placid looking man ask my gentleman neighbour if he had read H. L's last *Reverie*.

I found myself repeating H. L.—H. L., and my heart palpitated; while, without hearing my neighbour's reply, I inquired who was H. L.?

"Oh dear! do you not know? have you not heard?" exclaimed the *bas bleu;* "why all the world echoes that inquiry. Do you not know?"

"I fancy this lady knows as much as any one else," was my neighbour's reply. "H.L. is an invisible poet."

"Invisible girl!" said the lady.

"I suppose you will say that the mind is of no sex, and yet you contend that the unknown is a lady."

"None but a woman could breathe such tenderness."

A strange expression passed over the gentleman's countenance, while he said in an inquiring tone,—

"And the passion?"

The lady drew herself up, and replied in a voice poised to the most correct inflexion, "she was no judge of that." The man followed up his victory,—"And the strength, the play of imagination, the grasp of intellect, —are they, too, feminine?"

"I could quote you scores of women who have excelled in all."

"Ladies always excel!"

"Then," she continued, "the argument is at an end."

"Ladies never argue but for victory; so it is better to give in at once."

I spoke:—"In the argument, you have forgotten the lady."

"Oh, the poet—no, there is little chance of being permitted to do *that*. An author seldom permits the public to become forgetful." This was said with a smile and a sneer—a sort of mingled expression, the exact meaning of which it would be difficult to define. The great lady, who had written a few poems in addition to her reviews, and had once sent a play to a manager, cast a reproachful look at the object of her former attentions, while an indignant reply, which, however, I had not the courage to utter, sent the blood to my cheeks. The over-dressed gentleman looked round, as if he had said something which, if not heard, was worth hearing; but the old man who had started the inquiry could not remain silent!

"It is the public, sir," he said, "who will not suffer the author to be forgotten; at least,

not as long as the freshness of novelty and fashion is attached to productions, the popularity of which declines after a time."

"Not, surely, if they are of sterling merit," observed another.

"I have lived long enough to see sterling merit out of fashion," replied the old man, drily.

"Authors are injudicious in out-writing themselves; they should not write when they have out-lived their popularity," said the fine gentleman.

"But they must live," continued the old man; "they are seldom so over-paid as to be able to do more than exist, particularly in that sphere for which talent and taste are supposed to fit them."

"They are sometimes vastly amusing, though; I could name one, two, or three who never come well out," observed the would-be critic, while sipping his wine, "but who take one dreadfully in occasionally; for you naturally expect people to talk as they write; and yet one I know, in particular, who never says—never absolutely says—anything I can understand."

"*That*," said the old man, fixing his deep-set grey eyes on the speaker, "*that*, sir, may be *your* fault, not *his*."

After a moment, the over-dressed gentleman bowed, and said—"Perfectly true;" and his fair friend tittered. I could have almost pitied him; the tables were so completely turned, rather by the manner than the words.

"But who," I again inquired, "who is the lady with the mysterious initials?"

"Some say, madam," answered the old gentleman, "that the mysterious initials, 'H. L.,' belong to a French lady; for I believe there is ample proof that the communications come from abroad; others, that the translations from the Latin and Greek poets, which are occasionally given, bear witness of classic knowledge, and a taste only brought to perfection in our Universities; in short, during the last three days, the whole world is alive with curiosity to discover *who* the unknown poet is. But, to my mind, the less that is seen of an author the better; I have known popularity injured, if not destroyed, by the sight of an unpicturesque person; and, as

everyone forms an idea, unless the poet should be a Proteus, it would be impossible to satisfy all."

"I like the dramatic pieces which have appeared in the new gazette better than the poems," said a lady, whom I had observed as taking much interest in the conversation; "they are evidently the productions of an experienced dramatist."

"The poems," said another, "have all the fire and fervour of youth."

"The translations show such depth of learning, and such a thorough acquaintance with the subject; while the translator's notes contain the ablest criticism I have ever read," said the old gentleman.

I was bewildered. The initials 'H. L.' had struck upon my heart. I combined them with Helen Lyndsey, and thought, that as she had found a market for her talent, I had discovered how she had gained means to discharge her father's debts; but I knew she was not an 'experienced dramatist,' and I could not fancy her a critic or a classic.

"Are you not going to follow the ladies?" inquired the fine gentleman.

I had not perceived that the ladies had risen, so absorbed was I by my conjectures; and, as I stumbled after them, the old man said—"We must talk again about this mystery. I see you think, or hope, you have discovered it."

CHAPTER XI.

"Too faithful heart! thou never canst retrieve
Thy withered hopes: conceal the cruel pain!
O'er thy lost treasure still in silence grieve;
But never to the unfeeling ear complain;
From fruitless struggles, dearly bought, refrain!"

TIGHE.

IF the half-hour *before* dinner is proverbially stupid, the hour—or, as (happily gone) used to be in the drinking days of England, the hours—*after*, were, in general, very wearisome. Your 'show ladies,' young or old, those who put on their 'company manners,' as they do their company dresses—for a purpose, seldom take the trouble to speak to their fellow-women in the drawing-room. Ensconced in sofa corners, or extended in a way that would spoil the ruffs of their great grand-

mothers without the aid of a clear-starcher—they indulge in the *dolce far niente* to their hearts' content, and will hardly take the trouble to notice the most interesting *dénouement*, or describe the most lovely draperies. Those who can sing will rarely sing until the gentlemen come up, and a NOBODY like me, who has neither sons nor daughters to marry, invariably finds ample time for the 'musing,' rather than reflection, which follows dinner in the sleepy atmosphere of the luxurious withdrawing room. If the lady of the house be very good-natured she will give me a nod, or blow me a kiss from the tips of her gloves, across the room; and no matter how dull I look, she will say, "Ah! I see, amusing yourself as usual, we never mind *you*."

On the evening I refer to, however, I was not left entirely to myself; the lady, a Mrs. Hamilton, who had given her opinion concerning the mysterious poet, renewed the conversation by abruptly saying, "I think, nay, I am certain, that the author of these poems is not only a woman, but a foreigner. I have seen the handwriting, which is very bad, and

the spelling worse; now, no one who can write, as she writes, could spell badly, unless she were a foreigner!"

Helen's careless spelling, arising from her habit of thinking how to express—not how she was to spell—her thoughts, came fully to my remembrance, and my hopes revived. I did not, however, ask any questions, or even hint a difference of opinion, and the lady continued, "I have a bit of her writing at this moment in my possession. I am curious in such things, and, as you seem interested, I will show it to you."

My heart beat, while with considerable formality she drew forth a pocket-book, and placing it on her lap, opened it with much care: it was filled with torn and soiled scraps, and taking them out one by one, she said, "Here it is!—but no, this is a bit of Hatfield's writing, he who shot at that dear old king; I had a great deal of trouble to get that; and—this—but this is a morsel of the real Mrs. Glasse's way of keeping her cooking memoranda—curious! look, how oddly she wrote dumpling—then apple—cloves in the middle;

and this, I should not wonder if this was it"—I extended my hand—"it is either her writing, or Mrs. Trimmer's receipt in poetry for blacking (she who wrote so charmingly about Flapsey and Dicksey you know!)"

It certainly was not Helen's writing, neither was it the poetical receipt. I was almost too interested in the subject to think, as I had often thought previously, of the weakness that led Mrs. Hamilton to prize things, not because of their worth, but their oddity. She turned paper over paper, gazing at each with her round, good-natured eyes, while I sat by in an agony of suspense.

"No," she said at last; "no, I have not got it at all—it must be at home; but you could have made nothing of it—the most obscure pot-hooks and hangers you ever saw! Moore and Southey write exquisite hands; and, by the way, notwithstanding what Disraeli says, I quite believe the fact, that people's characters can be traced in their handwriting. I am sure it holds good with young Byron—do you not think so?"

I had never seen his handwriting—how

could I tell? I had evidently fallen in Mrs. Hamilton's esteem, but after a time she showed me a bit of the 'Corsair,' which certainly had a most careless, untameable character—up and down, in and out; and I fear that even my enthusiasm for the great poet was so much checked by the new belief which had taken possession of my mind, that 'H. L.' and Helen Lyndsey were one and the same person, that I seemed unworthy of the trouble the good soul took to interest and inform my ignorance.

"There is one thing certain!" she continued, "the author, if this popularity continue, must be more or less than human not to stand forth; and, let her be as old as the pyramids, and as ugly as Sycorax, she is sure of, at least, one season's fame following, and many would think a whole life well spent to achieve *that*."

I shuddered for poor Helen, and asked Mrs. Hamilton—"if she had ever known an instance where such popularity contributed to a woman's happiness?"

"Happiness," she repeated; "why people form such different ideas of what constitutes

happiness. Some place it in one or other of the varieties of fame; some in a bread-and-milk sort of existence, inseparable from husband, home, and children; some consider happiness to be a mighty clapping of hands, and large quantities of praise in the morning papers; others again place it in speculation. I can remember the South Sea Bubble, when all England should have been sent to Bedlam. I believe many couple it with good eating; some, I believe, would, like the Neapolitans, believe that happiness consists in sleeping in the sun—only, unfortunately, in England we have no sun to sleep in! I heard a clever man say, that no one who entered on public work but believed public praise the most valuable reward; and I really think there is truth in the remark; To bring the thing home: I did a piece of embroidery some years ago; which was shown to Queen Charlotte, and she said, 'It is quite equal to Linwood's.' Well, for months and months after, I was ill-content with the approbation my relatives and friends bestowed upon my handiwork. The county paper had re-

peated the Queen's praise, and everything I did, whether in cross-stitch, long-stitch, tent-stitch, or even cambric veining, I wanted the Queen to see. It is all past and gone now; but I suffered bitterly from a lack of the public praise, of which I had only tasted. It had never been my food, but even the *aroma* was now sufficient to disturb my brain.

"A woman," I replied, "has so little acknowledged influence in public life, that she is better out of it altogether."

"Very likely," said Mrs. Hamilton, smiling, and evidently thinking my opinion was not worth having; "very likely, but, for all that, people will think a great deal of it. It is pleasant to be popular and made much of. Why men, great lordly men, will throw away their consistency, their fortunes, their characters, their lives, for praise, or even notoriety. I grant you it is a mistake and a pity, but it is no less a *fact;* and you would feel its truth as keenly as I do, if you had been praised by the Queen, and seen the praise repeated in your own county paper."

When the old gentleman came up, I waited

with some anxiety, expecting the conversation he had promised, he looked at me as though we had never met before; and, in fact, I *saw* that just then he could not have explained anything, much less a mystery.

The party separated, not without sundry deprecatory remarks and sneers against the young poet by the disappointed authoress.

In the morning I communicated my conjectures to Florence, who had been reading one of H. L.'s Dramatic Scenes, without having an idea that her cousin Helen was the author. My suspicion, I can hardly tell why, had resolved itself into a certainty—one of those obstinate 'certainties' that take possession of the mind, and for which one cannot account. Florence shared my anxiety, but not my belief; indeed, my young friend's mind had been lately much engrossed by faith in the infallible goodness in which first love never fails to enshrine its first idol. Florence was not what is vulgarly called 'in love.' She had not dressed, and danced, and sung, and flirted herself into a passion, but she had suffered herself to become, at first interested

and afterwards almost absorbed, by the attentions of a gentleman young enough to secure affection, and sufficiently her senior to command respect.

I was not astonished that Florence was attracted by his personal beauty and his vivid imagination; but, with all my love for her, I was rather surprised that Mr. Marley had been, on the first evening of their meeting, so entirely captivated. He seemed to set so much value on state, and style, and fashion; had lived so much abroad, and was so courted by the highest class of London society, that I fancied some one more sparkling and brilliant than my own simply good and gentle Florence would have been more suited to his taste. There was an uncertainty about his manner which I did not much like, and yet he was constant as a shadow to his young love. He did not (I thought) prize her more valuable qualities as highly as they deserved, yet he set amazing store by the minor ones. Such, after all, is the case with most men: the lesser—more every-day—qualities both of mind and manner of women are the most called into action, and,

therefore, contribute the most to man's comfort, and the domestic attractions of his wife and home ; the higher qualities frequently remain dormant— a vast mine unmoved, unworked, but ready with its store of value when needed for some great purpose. Mr. Marley was not only a scholar, but an accomplished man, reading as few men do, and adding to the worth of what he read the fascination of a rich voice, and an intonation that gave double power to the charmed words. Moreover, Mr. Marley was the fashion; he was supposed to be the author of a book, when authors were not as numurous as roses in June, and when it was necessary to write with care concerning what had been observed at leisure; he had (he did not deny it) produced a volume of travels, deliberate travels, without the assistance of steam or railroads. The book deserved the reputation it acquired, and Mr. Marley was *fêted* and courted, and ladies breakfasted with him, and he supped with them, and sang his words to their music, and their music to his words; he was pronounced a 'love' by some, and a 'hero' by

others, or fit to be a 'hero,' which was the same thing; and, while very young ladies lamented he was not in the Guards, others confessed that a handsome man of thirty, with thousands a-year, varying by report from five to ten, could be out of the Guards, and yet in the fashion. Mr. Middleton appreciated his attentions to Florence, but it never entered into his head to imagine his daughter highly favoured thereby; and, while 'fashionables' were wondering 'what could attract Mr. Marley—who, *that* season at all events, could have commanded any match—to the side of the lovely, quiet Florence Middleton, with not a very large fortune, small expectations, and a very eccentric father,' Mr. Middleton held frequent consultations with Mrs. Dellamere as to Mr. Marley's eligibility or non-eligibility, as a husband for his child. There are few contrasts more startling than the estimate people form of their own little world, and the estimate formed of it by others. It was amusing to me to see how Mr. Marley fell into the habit of thinking me a 'NOBODY,' doing sentiment or satire, love or learning, as their fitness for the

occasion occurred to him, without ever bestowing upon me the fragment of an idea. Florence hated sarcasm; she was, perhaps, slow at enjoying wit, seldom seeing the flash before she heard the thunder; but sarcasm made her uncomfortable, and Mr. Marley managed to soften whatever he said of that sort, as though it were not said from unkindness or a love of the habit, but simply as a comment upon what had gone before. He had wonderful tact—too much tact for an honest mind; and while I rounded the heel of a stocking, or gathered the meshes of a purse, I have seen him veer to all points of the compass; yet he did it so adroitly that Florence believed him a miracle of consistency in all things. To be sure, he was her first love, and women become more clear-sighted when they get over that little insanity, as natural to Miss in her teens as teething to the infant, who cannot account for——yet why should I say so ill-tempered a thing when speaking of my dear Florence? As to Mr. Marley, I *never thought* kindly of him; his wit and learning, his beauty of person, put me out of temper—

I could hardly account for it. I talk very little, but I talked less before him than before any one; so that sometimes, if I made a quiet observation, he would look up astonished, and then, hardly noticing the interruption, pursue his metaphor, or continue the poem he was reading. One day, Florence pressed him to read a sort of madrigal of 'H. L.'s:' he seemed unwilling to do so, but Florence said that even her dear 'NOBODY' would like to hear it, as she attached a romance of her own to the mystic letters. It was evidently the first time Florence had alluded to Helen in connection with this mystery, and I could not but think it strange, that what had once occupied her thoughts to the exclusion of other things, had so completely given place to a new feeling.

"Do you know, Mr. Marley," I said, "there are some descriptions in your book so like the 'Passes of the Hills,' of H. L.'s, which have been so quoted, that I could have fancied them written by one and the same person."

Mr. Marley became deadly pale, and bent over the journal into which the madrigal had been copied.

"Is it possible," exclaimed Florence, in a tone of mingled hope and enquiry, "that *you* can be the magician—the 'H. L.' of the world's enchantment?"

"No, I assure you," he replied; "Miss Middleton does me too much honour."

"I have got the 'Passes of the Hills' here," I persisted, withdrawing from my netting-case three poems which I had cut out of the gazette; "and here is Mr. Marley's volume. Now, look, Florence."

The author rose, and, turning his livid face towards me with an expression which I never forgot, he enquired, "What do you mean?"

The tone roused Florence from her drawing, and the papers trembled in my fingers; his look chilled my very soul.

"Do you mean that I borrowed ideas or information from this—H. L.?" he continued.

"Neither, exactly," I answered; "the poems were published since your book."

"Then, madam, do you mean that I am H. L.?"

"Oh, dear, no!" I replied; "I never imagined *that* for a moment; I could not fancy that!"

Something in my manner, I suppose, offended him, for Florence enquired, "What has dear 'NOBODY' said?"

"Indeed, I do not know," I replied, "but Mr. Marley seems vexed at something. Nothing is more common than for persons of genius to think alike—and if they think alike, they may write alike; it is still more probable if they have met, and communed together."

Mr. Marley's pale cheek became crimson, and in a voice suppressed and stern, while bending over the poem, he enquired—"What reason I had to suppose that he had ever met or communed with the invisible girl?"

"I do not even know it is a girl," exclaimed Florence; "that is my friend's notion. I really think she is in the secret, after all, and you too, Mr. Marley; you both look so confused."

"Your friend is a keen observer, I perceive," he said, coldly, "and, therefore, ought to know that authors do not like to be considered plagiarists."

"She did not mean to accuse you of that, I am certain," apologized Florence.

"No!" I said, earnestly, "indeed I did not.

I have almost forgotten what I meant when first I spoke. I believe it was simply, that some passages in Mr. Marley's book, and these 'Passes of the Hills,' were written by the same hand: that was really all."

"A charming explanation," said Mr. Marley.

"I dare say," I continued, "that Florence may be right, and that you *are* in the secret."

Mr. Marley's tact had only forsaken him for a minute; he now smiled as blandly as ever, and turned off the conversation by reading the madrigal with his usual feeling and expression. There was a sort of ante-room off the drawing-room—now, it would be called a *boudoir*. It contained a cabinet of shells, and some scientific instruments of Mr. Middleton's, and sundry easy chairs, and a writing-table, which all the *habitués* of the house used. That same evening we were going to the theatre: Mr. Marley had not dined with us, but he was to be our escort. Mrs. Dellamere was in the drawing-room, where Mr. Middleton was enjoying his after-dinner newspaper; and Florence had not yet left her dressing-room. Whoever entered the drawing-room, was

obliged, of necessity, to pass through the anteroom, which, however, when the doors were closed, was altogether a separate apartment. I was seldom without some fragments of Helen's writing in my pocket, thinking they might unravel the mystery, which I confess engrossed my every thought: these had escaped from their envelope; and, with my back to the outer door, I was arranging them on the writing-table, when, suddenly, a hand crushed them down, and Mr. Marley, in a voice low and almost inarticulate from agitation, inquired, "Where did you obtain these papers?"

I looked at him, he was pale and trembling. "I had them from Helen," I replied, "and do me the favour to remove your hand at once; I have treasured them with too much care to endure their being crushed." He did so, and sat down.

"And when did you hear from her?"

"I never hear from her—I wish I did."

"Speak the truth! Do not tamper with me," he said, fiercely.

"I never speak anything but the truth," I

replied, calmly. "I never hear from her—I wish I did!"

"And these papers?"

"Her writing when little more than a child. But you know her—you know all?"

He fixed his eyes on me—such a deep-looking, soul-searching gaze as it was!

"I will not attempt to deceive you," he said, "for such penetration renders it impossible,"—this was said with the sneer of a demon—he paused—but soon continued—"ask nothing at present, for I cannot answer; and, above all, do not let Florence—do not let Miss Middleton know anything of *her* when she comes to England. Do not, if you value her peace—her character!"

"You have no right to question the character of Helen Lyndsey," I exclaimed, indignantly.

He made no observation, but the expression of his features was fearful—the most fearful I ever looked upon. There was a pause, and then, in his blandest tone, he said, "You are a woman of the world?"

"Indeed, Mr. Marley, I am not," I replied.

I could not suffer him to retain a wrong impression. "I never was, and never had any ambition to be—no one ever thought me—a woman of the world."

"Hush!" he exclaimed, "that is Florence—she is coming down."

"But we must talk of this again, Mr. Marley. I know you are deceived—or deceiving me."

"My dear lady, why should I deceive you? —you, the dearest, most loved friend of one who you know holds my hopes and happiness in thrall. But we will talk of this again, yet not just now—we have not time. I would entreat you when this phœnix comes to England not to see her. Well, if that be impossible, not to believe in her: and listen! whoever brought her in contact with Florence, though it were her own father, I would sever the bond, ay, even between father and child, rather than suffer her to——."

The opposite glass showed me the expression of his countenance, as he sought a word which should convey his feeling, and yet not outrage mine. At that moment, Helen, all,

everything in the world, was forgotten by me —all, save an unuttered prayer that Florence Middleton might repose in her mother's grave, rather than in the bosom of such a husband. He was still pausing for a word, when Florence entered, looking like the spirit of peace and love—the perfection of a high-minded, pure-minded English girl! a wreath of white roses rested on her brow, and her long, silken tresses descended low at either side of temples, consecrated by the Almighty to the purest intellect. She saw the papers, which now lay before me.

"Comparing notes—I see," she said playfully; "comparing notes. Well, Mr. Marley, you must help my friend, and who knows but we may find this lost cousin of mine?—that she may really come forth out of this dream and be a light—a very star among us? I shall be a zealous, not a jealous worshipper. I should so like to have a real living poet for my cousin!—it would be so delightful!"

Her unusual flow of spirits, at such a time was more than I could bear; I was overcome, and burst into tears. Poor Florence, she caressed me

as if I had been her mother; she declared she would not go without me; that she could not; she would wait. Mr. Marley left us together. I longed to ask her not to go that evening to the theatre. I panted to pour out my thoughts to her, though it needed but little reflection to show how foolish such a course would have been at such a time. I was soon tranquillized, and was obliged to listen to Mr. Marley's tender solicitude, his hopes that I was better, and endure the pressure of his hand, accompanied by a 'remember!' only audible to my ears. *Who* was he?—whence came he? Mr. Middleton was at no time communicative—and there was a degree of reserve about him, which prevented my giving utterance to the enquiries that I longed to make; at last I ventured to ask in what part of England Mr. Marley's family resided. Mr. Middleton said that his family had possessions in Barbadoes—very large possessions—which Mr. Marley was then negociating to dispose of, as he wished to transfer his property to England.

"Had he brothers or sisters?"

Oh, dear no! he was an only son—in fact

an only child, a man of extraordinary and most varied information—and so thoroughly English in all his affections and tastes, in fact he believed in nothing good out of England.

We all believed *that* during the war.

I dared not speak frankly to him; and if I had so spoken, what proof had I that Mr. Marley was what I believed?—what proof that Helen Lyndsey was not what he had intimated?—what proof of anything? Ay, what proof of anything had I?

CHAPTER XII.

"He stood beside that stream again,
When years had fled in strife and pain:
He look'd for its calm course in vain,—
For storms profaned its peaceful flow,
And clouds o'erhung its crystal brow."

PROCTER.

I HAVE all my life been subject to fits (so to call them) of unconquerable lassitude and languor, rendering me unable to move, almost unable to speak. I am sometimes obliged to yield to their influence; and, worn out in body as well as in mind, feel as though it would be a relief, to pass from this world, without farther care or concern about anything or any human being. This shutting the eyes, the ears, the

very heart, to what is moving and breathing around me, is never of long duration; but it is grievous to think, that while it continues there is a passing away of that precious current of time which sweeps into eternity, without one record of good performed, or even contemplated. This torpidity of soul, however, seems, when past, to have been a time of refreshment to the body, and I wake with increased strength, with no pain but the consciousness of having left much undone that might have been accomplished. This state frequently succeeds intense anxiety, and I now endured it for a much longer period than usual. After my strange interview with Mr. Marley, I had hardly sufficient energy to enable me to return home—and when within my own sanctuary—I seemed to dream, rather than think, over the little I had said to the purpose; how much I might have inquired about, how could it be that I had so little presence of mind, when I ought to have had so much? I longed to communicate my thoughts and feelings to some one with whom I could take counsel, and yet I could not endure to repeat to any living

creature that an aspersion had been cast upon Helen. A doubt no longer existed in my own mind, that H. L. and Helen Lyndsey were the same;—how could I doubt it? how confirm it? The following evening, Florence came to me; I saw the moment she entered, that the great event of her life had passed—she need not have told me, but I knew she would—and I asked no question, but waited until she talked off her first bashfulness. She had been uneasy all night, she said, about me, and had driven out in the evening to know how I was; she would have come the first thing in the morning, but something Mr. Marley had said the previous night—she almost forgot what it was, but it was something—about wishing to speak to her father, prevented her; and, then, without observing the painful feeling under which I was suffering, she flung her arms around me, and, bursting into tears, declared she had never been so happy, that *now* she knew HIS mind —no, she did not mean her father's mind, that was easily read at any time, but another's. For shame! I knew, I must know whom she meant. She believed in her heart I knew it before any

of them; she was certain that *he* had communicated it to me in the ante-room—indeed, he had almost confessed as much!" I quite trembled. Poor child! she thought it was with joy, and blessed me for my warm sympathy, and the interest I had always taken in her; she called me her mother's friend, and it seemed as though I heard a voice crying to me from the grave, 'to save her child;' and, suffocating as I was, I entreated her for her own, for her father's sake, not to engage herself so suddenly—to wait: she ought not to decide at once; she was young, and had known him only a little time. I did not ask her to break off, or even meet it coolly, only to consider, to pause, for a little time. Florence drew back at my words: as she looked at me, her face wet with tears, yet glowing with happiness, reminded me of a rose upon which the shower has fallen—bright in the beams of the summer sun. Despite her tears, I never saw such a picture of full and earnest happiness: it was, indeed, as full of beauty as of hope.

"But I *am* engaged, dearest," she replied; and a shade of anxiety, as to why I should

wish her *not* engaged overspread her face. "Look here," and half-kneeling, she held up her hand, showing the pledge-ring. "Oh! I shall be so happy! I was ashamed to tell my father so; and dear Mrs. Dellamere, would you believe it? was full of the business-part of the affair, and talked like an old parchment lawyer of settlements and jewels, and I know not what; but I thought I should have full sympathy from you; you have always given me that, and yet now you look so discontented. What *is* the matter, dearest? Why, my dear father seems more than satisfied. Mr. Marley has behaved so nobly about money matters; he said he would not hear of my father's parting with a fraction to me now; and added he would settle some large sum upon me, without reference to *my* property, this proves a disinterested affection, does it not? Oh," she continued, "Oh! dearest NOBODY, why are you so cold?—why so strange to me, in these, the happiest hours of my existence?" I told her, God knows how truly, that I was not cold, nor strange, but that I disapproved of sudden engagements; and that,

as I was not well, she must forgive me. She spoke no more of the happy future, but tears gathered in her eyes, and she sat with clasped hands, seeking some subject to talk upon; and at last said it would be such a pleasure now to find her cousin Helen, whether she was, or was not the literary mystery, as Marley was just the person to appreciate her in every respect, poor girl!

I am so unused to deception, so much in the habit, when I *do* speak, of speaking what I think, that I hardly knew what to reply, and, after all, what could I say? What right had I to suppose that Marley had not authority for what he had said to me?—the most brilliant, the most highly-gifted in talent, are not always the highest in moral worth. Why should Helen enshroud herself in mystery?—why conceal her refuge and her course from those who loved her? My head and heart both ached; and, at the very moment these thoughts were vibrating in my mind, I had the consciousness that the worldly spirit within me was pleading the cause of the rich man of the world, in opposition to the claims of the

woman of genius. How I hated myself! and yet, in defiance of my own sympathies—I had almost written *knowledge*—the worldly pleading continued. I had evidence from Florence herself, that the man was possessed with a spirit of untruth, that he sought to make her believe he had communicated his love for her to me. He had alluded to it certainly, and an untruthful mind shelters itself under various semblances; but our theme was very different from that to which his betrothed referred. To conceal my feelings, I proposed we should walk together upon the Heath, not along the beaten road, but down the back, leaving the Vale of Health behind us. We did so almost without speaking, and at last rested under a clump of noble trees, in silent contemplation of the 'mighty city' reposing beneath the beams of the full moon.

The evening was one of surpassing serenity; the heavens of that pure mild blue, only seen in England during a few of the clear nights of summer; the lights in the distant city seemed to sparkle for effect—so as to mark the public buildings, the lines of the noble streets, the

extent of the great squares, the giant span of our magnificent river—rather than to give light. Many a church spire and massive tower stood out sharply defined against the sky; while, above all, loomed the round dome of old St. Paul's, the head of the 'mighty heart,' which still palpitated in the highways. There is an immensity in London, seen from either of its tributary villages—Highgate or Hampstead—which, be the mind ever so preoccupied, asserts its mastery over every other thought. The city, so enormous in its proportions, so massive when 'distance lends enchantment to the view,' so much greater from the stillness, the solemnity, the *vastness*, which is indicated, rather than expressed, in the various indistinct distances, so regal, so worthy of our own mighty country—that we forget, while contemplating the magnitude of its extent, how much houseless misery is within and around it; nor do we hear the curses arising from sin, that bay the heavens, or the wails of want and misery, pleading at the Almighty footstool. The greatest feast a contemplative creature can enjoy, in broad England, is such

a seat, on such a night, with London underneath.

Florence gazed with me in silence; and I believe her heart was as full as a young heart could be of the great theme. There is a broad pool of water in a hollow in the foreground, fixed in the rich carpet of the Heath, a mirror where 'th' innocent moon' can look upon herself; the tiny villas, scattered round the Lower Heath, were sparkling with lights; and from them arose the laugh of childhood, the small bark of the pet-dog, and the various sounds of domestic life, not harshly toned, but softened by distance, so as to be in harmony with all around.

"The carriage will meet us on Downshire Hill," whispered Florence; "come back with me to town, it will do you good. You stay at the cottage until you are beset with fancies that make you ill; and, indeed, you must not indulge them as you do. Your hand is chill at this moment—chill and moist; perhaps you think I shall love you less hereafter; indeed, indeed, you do me wrong; that would be impossible."

On that subject I *could* speak. It was my joy to tell her, that a single thought of self had never intruded on the hope of her happiness—that I never imagined we could change—that I knew too well the steadfastness of her nature to fancy that;—I could not then accompany her home, but I would soon, very soon, see her.

We walked slowly down the hill, and then she would insist on leaving me at my garden-gate, where she entered her carriage. As I passed the window of my little drawing-room, I saw a figure bending over the book I had been endeavouring to read, and could not but smile that my maid, who could hardly spell English, should have found any attraction in the *Phèdre* of Corneille. "It is only," I thought, "of a piece with the acting of worldlings—seeming to know much more than they do know:" the hall-door was opened, I entered the parlour, and, in a moment, was clasped in Helen's arms. I knew her before she spoke—before I saw her; I knew her stifled sobs, her quick breathing, her grasp so ardent in its affection—although she had

grown from a child into a woman; I knew the tresses, braided though they were, that pressed against my cheek—her murmured love. Oh, what a meeting it was! And when I sunk exhausted on the sofa, she sat opposite to me, her arms crossed upon the table against which she leaned; her small, white, and exquisitely beautiful hands showing, like sculptured marble, from beneath the loose sleeves of black silk which fell back from her wrists—her finely moulded throat, supporting a head that combined the highest intellectual powers with grace and beauty, decorated by a simple knot of luxuriant black hair fastened at the back by a golden arrow. Her eyes, fringed by the longest lashes, seemed to me more bright, more wandering, than ever; and, but that an expression of sadness subdued their fire, they would have been painfully dazzling. The short, abrupt nose was now fully developed; and though at war with classic beauty, it gave a *riant* effect to the countenance which rendered it more piquant and effective in its rapid transitions. If her mouth had but harmonized with the other features, the face would have

been the most captivating I ever looked upon. There she sat—my long-lost Helen!—there before me, beneath my own roof once more, her beauty in the first and full perfection of womanhood, illumined by an intellect beyond her sex and years. And then there seemed to me no unfeminine confidence about her. The tears—full round tears—coursed each other down her cheeks; and, at last, resting her head on her clasped hands, she gave way to her feelings, and wept and sobbed abundantly. I restrained my own emotion, and would not even question her, but left her to herself; then, wearied as a child would be with crying, she sat on the floor, and leaned her head upon my lap.

"I left you," she said at last, "I left you in poverty, and in the bitterest disgrace that England recognises—the disgrace of debt.—I return, seared and old at heart and worn in spirit, but with a name which the hereafter of my country shall not blush to hear!" Although there was triumph in the manner in which she spoke this last sentence, it was no unwomanly triumph: it was glory rather than victory.

"I felt from the first, despite all they surmised, felt from the very first you were the 'H. L.' that had set all usual conjectures at defiance," I said.

"I thought a sort of instinct would tell you *that*," she replied;" but it must be a secret still. I will not unveil to the world until I have established a reputation—gained a position that cannot be disputed. I will not depend for favour upon either fancy or fashion. I have a consciousness of power, which *is* power; and if I cannot be happy, I will be great."

"But, my dear Helen!" said I: she interrupted me at once, and the feeling that had lent such dignity and spirit to her expression, changed to one of perfect playfulness.

"Now, my dearest NOBODY! you must not put on your preaching face, and tell me truths and facts; I know what truth is, though my staple commodity is fiction, and facts are hard, unmouldable things; nothing can be done with them; turn them which way you will, there they are, and there they will remain. If I had not felt that I deserved all you were going to

say, I would have discovered my retreat and my plans to you long ago; but I should starve were I to practise truth!" I saw she was excited, and thought I would endeavour to change the subject.

"Your father, dear Helen ——"

"A living sorrow! my dear friend. I would have remained longer abroad, for there I should have had less difficulty in continuing unknown, but for him: even the shadow of protection that he gave, has passed away; his mind has wandered from its dwelling to return no more; he does not even know me, and I doubt if anyone would know him! It has driven me almost mad at times to note how unconscious he is of my presence. I carry him with me everywhere; but he grows so much worse, that I know not what to do; if it had been madness, I could have borne it better than this dreadful dreary stagnation—this worse than childish imbecility. I think that, perhaps, bringing him back to his old haunts might recal him. Is poor Jerry alive?"

I told her of the Middletons' kindness to the old servant, but that he wearied of con-

tinual service, and came and went just as he pleased; this seemed to give her the deepest pleasure, and she continued to repeat, 'Poor old Jerry!' 'Good, faithful Jerry!' while her lips quivered with emotion. Though it was growing late, we thought not of the time, she had so much to say, I so much to learn, and yet even to me she was not communicative. Her feelings gushed forth, but she avoided events and facts. She spoke guardedly of her literary career, and seemed to shudder at the difficulties which had beset, and still beset her path. Her intense love of poetry, born with her as it was, made her feel it positive degradation to traffic in what she called the 'Almighty essence burning in the human heart.' She promised, hereafter, to tell me how her first productions got into print, and how they were first noticed. It was a delight past all telling to pour forth her soul in poetry; but short poems, even to her, brought small sums, and while so many stars were in the ascendant, she could not dispose of long ones, and so she worked prose to order—so many pages of humour subdued by so many pages of pathos—

free translations—criticisms—everything she had done, and hoped to do again—sketches of society, which one or two facts, stimulated by her keen observation, and illuminated by her wit, enabled her to make so life-like, that all critics pronounced it impossible for any woman to be so well read in human nature, therefore, they must have been produced by some unknown philosopher, who would one day burst upon the world and confess his deeds; there was a trembling scorn upon her lip while she said this, which told more than words what little faith she placed in such opinions; and yet she seemed deeply anxious about them, inquiring earnestly what I had heard, what read, what seen? I wanted her to remain with me all night, but she said she could not; that at night her father was particularly unquiet, calling her up five or six times, and not attempting to rest unless she were there to sit by his side until he slept. She had left the carriage at the turn of the hill. She gave me her address, insisting that no human being, not even Florence, should be made acquainted with her arrival; told me, with one of her

rapid transitions from grave to gay, that something wonderful would happen soon ; that I must steal to see her—perhaps her father would know *me;* then spoke of the pleasure it had given her to peep in at the window of the Rylands', and instead of seeing them working hard, as she had feared they would be, they were seated at their frugal supper, the closed Bible on the table, and the well-fed cat looking sleek and contented on the elbow of the well-remembered sofa. In a moment she had caught the picture and transferred it, and there, with a thousand others, it would remain—mingled, and yet detached. And the Cobbs—the fine Mrs. Brevet-Major and her good-natured husband—she wished to know if they were still moving after the phantom of 'high society,' as in the old time. We parted with many embraces, and another burst of tears. I determined, for it was near midnight, to walk with her to the carriage ; but, when she got to the gate, she would turn the other way, as she said, "Just to catch a glimpse of her old home." It was not two hundred yards, and she could see the chimneys, the night was so

clear. If I were afraid, she would go by herself—she never knew fear. I did not at all like a walk on the Heath at that hour, but I would not, indeed I could not, control her, and with rapid steps we hastened towards her birth-place.

"Can you account for it?" she said to me, "that the home of my childhood was the scene of unceasing sorrow—sorrow from sunrise to sunset—nothin gbut sorrow; I opened my eyes to tears, and tears flowed from them while I slept—nothing but tears; and yet its memory to me is as the memory of Paradise to our first parents. The little dusty garden at the back is my Eden; the bower overgrown by privet and ancient woodbine, studded with insect architecture, where I used to steal to write fragments of verse upon my broken slate, excites more emotion in my heart than did the noblest palaces I have seen abroad; the buttercups which poor Jerry gathered on the Heath, and which I used to weave into crowns—ay, and crown myself with them too, in haughty, heart-swelling triumph, when I had expressed a new idea to my satisfaction, or conquered an obstinate

couplet; those buttercups! richer they are in my memory than circlets of jewels, chains of gold! and the bird, the bird I loved so much; believe me, I never yet heard the song of a bird that the image of my own pent-up warbler was not before me. What strongholds these childish things build in our heart of hearts! My father's old horse! thick, disproportionate creature! I cannot see a horse, no matter how perfect he is in the superb beauty of his race, that I do not remember the caressing manner with which my father's brown cob used to rest down his nostril on my head, and lick, like a dog, the little hand I held for his greeting. And those poor Rylands, the suffering patient girl and her ever-working sister, knowing no rest, seeming to require none, always ready, always good-tempered, subduing their emotions, letting no trace of them be seen, except upon their quivering lips and whitened cheeks. And you! how much enjoyment you procured me, how much pain you alleviated, how much endured, and all for mine and my poor father's sake. The memory of all I suffered there, though it is burnt into

my heart, is as nothing to the love I bear mere sticks and stones. Oh, those things, those things of nothing that net us in this world!" All this she uttered rapidly, she never seemed to say too much, because what she said laid hold upon the mind, and could not be forgotten. She told me at first, the sight of the chimneys would have sufficed, but I knew she would reach the gate; not one living creature did we meet, not a thing, save a marauding cat, which crossed the road rapidly. It was impossible to imagine anything more solitary, more desolate: the night so bright at its commencement, had darkened, and by some effect of light which I cannot understand, when I looked towards London, it seemed risen in the air, a city of shadows; while Finchley, and all between it, and beyond it, was one huge gulf of mist—grey and impenetrable mist—out of which one or two trees stared wildly, while the clouds careered above, hurled on before a wind, which, though we heard it, we did not feel. We stood before the gate: she shook it, but it was fastened within, and a dog, roused by the attempt, barked loudly.

"I wish they would open it," she said; how strengthened she had grown in the wilfulness that never brooked contradiction. She thrust her slender arms through the palings, and snatched at the nearest trees, tearing off a handful of leaves from one and then from another, and having done so, turned silently away. The longer we remained in the darkness, the more distinctly we could see; and she held towards me the fragments she had gathered.

"Do you believe in omens, my dear friend? look here, here is the first garland I have gathered on my return to my own home, to my native land! Look; do but look!—yew and laurel!—a few leaves of the laurel, a great bough of the yew! I might have read my destiny aright without this—but this confirms it. When a woman achieves the laurel, she must take the yew with it. Immortality!—only a leaf of immortality, to soften sorrow and envy, and destruction and death—a leaf of the laurel, a branch of the yew!—and is this really to be all?"

I pressed closely to her side, and we walked rapidly towards where we saw the carriage,

and I felt very glad it was in sight; two persons, who had evidently alighted to relieve a horse which was dragging a dog-cart up the hill, were close to us; the one, a servant most probably, was walking in the road, the other was on the pathway.

"It is Marley," muttered Helen, and night though it was she doubled her veil over her face. She knew him then—she knew him, and wished to avoid him. I was cloaked and hooded from head to foot, so I had little fear of being recognised.

We passed, and as we did so he raised his hat—a courtesy towards women only learned abroad. I could hear that his step paused. We walked rapidly onward. I could not perceive from where the carriage was, whether or not he lingered on the pathway. I fancied he did: and, after bidding adieu to Helen, instead of returning by the road, I resolved to do so by a path which led to the back of my cottage. I entered, and desiring the servant not to bring a light to the front of the house, I ascended to my bed-room, which commanded an extensive view. The horse and servant

were out of sight, but Marley was pacing backward and forward in front of the house. I sat down, determined to observe his movements: twice he came across and laid his hand on the gate, as if resolved to enter and inquire, even at that hour, if I were at home. At last he passed to the opposite side of the road, and I watched his shadow fade away, now quite lost—lost beneath the shadows of umbrageous trees; then again appearing, slanting along the path, dimly, and indistinctly, but still there! those tell tale shadows! how often have they betrayed love's sweetest secrets; how often have they pointed the way which the murderer considered trackless; how often has the shadow of the loved one, falling upon the latticed window, changed hope into fulfilment; how joyfully do the young birds, the nestlings of spring, recognize, and greet the shadow of the parent's wing, as it crosses the sunbeams, that warmed them in her absence; how do the shadows lengthen and linger, when as the day draws to its close, we watch for the coming friend! how chill and unearthly are they in the moonlight, as though

they partook of the nature of that spirit world, which casts such strange unnatural gleams, upon our material, but mysterious globe! At last, even Marley's shadow disappeared, and I felt relieved, as if some noxious vapour had vanished. He must have recognized Helen; he must, doubtless, have observed that I was with her; perhaps he even saw that one, not two, entered the waiting carriage. What knowledge, then, had Marley and Helen of each other?

CHAPTER XIII.

"When the poor flesh, surviving, doth entomb
The reasonable soul."

SOUTHEY.

THE next morning, every shadow thrown upon the grass I fancied to be that of Marley; I attempted to write a note of congratulation to Mr. Middleton, and threw down my pen with a feeling of utter contempt for myself, that I should think of playing the hypocrite. I thought I would drive into town and see Florence, but what could I say to her? That odious Mrs. Major Cobb called. Time, that fills some people's heads, had certainly emptied hers—she was more absurd than ever—her

dignity had been offended by the fishmonger's passing off upon her a brill for a turbot, when she had company!—that and the hot weather, and her crimson satin bonnet with yellow feathers, almost threw me into a fever. She was full of a pair of embroidered slippers, which she proclaimed were intended as a '*coo d'eta*' for the Commander-in-Chief—a portrait of Lord Wellington on one, and of Napoleon Bonaparte on the other. She had, she said, added to Napoleon's military character, by the addition of a pair of black up-curled moustaches, and lamented she had never been able to prevail on her major to mount them! She had the slippers in her muff. What punishment should be inflicted on a woman with such execrable taste? I looked at them with offended eyes. "I see," she added, "you do not comprehend them; but, my dear!" laying her 'twelve-pounder,' (as Miss Saunders, her 'dear friend,' calls her hand) upon my arm, "you know you are 'Nobody,' still, I assure you, the mere patterns cost ten-and-sixpence!" as if *cost* redeemed vulgarity. I felt like a prisoner

breathing the air of freedom when she departed.

I thought I would write to Mr Marley, and ask him to explain what he had insinuated, and then I could not frame my sentences. I was restless and miserable. Mrs. Dellamere wrote me a long letter, in which the superiority of Honiton and Buckingham lace was mingled with raptures about Mr. Marley's generosity —verily the far-off sound of a marriage-bell rings the senses out of heads, young and old. I thought *her* proof against such folly, and yet, had it been that Florence was about to wed any other man, I am certain I should have been speculating in like manner. Mrs. Dellamere counted upon my taste in all the shopping—so quiet, sober, and grey, as my taste was! I took down one book after another, but could not read; I tried work, but had I continued, should have had it all to unpick—visions of those abominable slippers rose before me. I struck the chords of my piano, they were out of tune; I ordered a carriage, put on my bonnet, and resolved to visit Helen; and yet—what strange creatures we are!—

while I longed to be with her, to observe her —while I anticipated the glory that would surround her, when she came forth in all the radiance of success—I dreaded—what?—that Mr. Marley's words were true, and that Helen was changed. Changed? Yes, she *was* changed, there could be no doubt of that; but what right had I for a moment to believe the presence of genius had banished the more valuable attributes of woman?

The lodging she had taken was in a street off the Vauxhall-road. As it was then a place of fog and miasma, she had chosen to be there for a fortnight, she said, because it was out of the way, and because she could there best arrange her plans.

The road thither, after passing through the west-end, was like an entrance to another country; it would be difficult now to believe that such a miniature swamp could exist so near London. Along the widening and sloppy pathways were palings, formed, in most instances, of the staves of casks, inclining contrary-wise, sometimes in, sometimes out, of the enclosure; the houses whether advancing

to the front, or thrust backwards, as if ashamed to be seen, had an exceedingly perplexing look; some of them exhibited in front long strips of stands, upon which were displayed all manner of old iron, while a huge rusty cannon flanked one end, and a perforated vat, large enough for a brewhouse, the other. In truth, it would be quite impossible, passing rapidly as I did, to understand what the various utensils had been, that were heaped amid logs of wood—long rafters, piles of old bricks, mountains of shattered tiles, rabbit-hutches, and dog-houses; there certainly was nothing of what an artist would call 'keeping' in this display; old musty boxes full of ancient music, modern ribald books, and soiled medicine vials, telling their own story of disease and death; old pictures, so really old and good for nothing as to be past even a picture-dealer's doctoring, close to coloured three-halfpenny prints with green patches and yellow borderings; old bird-cages, and hideous arm chairs, vieing with still more hideous new ones; some marvellous old iron castings, worm-eaten cabinets, and a *cheveux de frise* of rusty

railings, clothes-poles, old muskets, and pikes, which might have served in the Irish rebellion, formed a sort of back ground. The business of these fag-ends of all imaginable trades was generally carried on *al fresco*, by a brown, ragged, loosely-dressed woman, who bustled about in short full petticoats, and half laced boots, looking earnest and fierce—or by a tawny man, who seemed as though the elements could have no effect upon him. I remember wondering where those people *did* live, the sheds looked so narrow and defenceless against wind and rain. Here and there a stumpy tree of the willow pattern, that had been cut down half-a-dozen times, shot forth sundry stripling branches, which moved about in a swaying, melancholy way, bending and twisting in the breeze, but looking so fresh and green that it was evident the soil was quite undrained. At last I closed my eyes, leaving the coachman to find the house without any hint of mine. He succeeded at last. What a dreary, wretched place it was! a girl, smelling of onions, with slip-shod shoes and stockingless legs—one of those white slaves who look as if they

had never sunned in a parent's smile, or heard a gentle word—pointed up to the 'drawing-room.' I stood for a moment at the half-open door, for the damsel flopped down quickly to where a murky flannel was floating in a pail half-full of water, *over* which I had nearly stumbled, and seemed not to care whether I went upstairs, or remained below—her hopeless face was past caring for anything. I was shocked that a creature so young should look so stolid. Helen was seated on a species of chair—called, I suppose, from their stern unfitness for the purpose, 'education chairs,' a tall high-backed thing, quilted with crossed cane; a desk, small, but superbly inlaid, was propped upon a moveable stand, all resting upon a green cloth, faded into yellowness; the chair and desk and stand, so out of character with the furniture of the room, were evidently her own; the solitary window was draped by coarse fiery-red merino curtains; the brown-holland blind was half off its roller, and, objecting to be rolled after the usual fashion, was pinned in the centre by a long pin—a thick yellow thing,

that would have thrown a French lady's-maid into convulsions.—The door-skirtings and shutters of the room had become a thick yellow colour, and, ill-painted at first, the turpentine oozed forth in large unhealthy spots; the carpet had never fitted, and showed intervals of unclean boards, and a stained baize was drawn over it, and nailed 'here and there' with 'two-penny tacks,' to conceal the rents; the brass fender and fire-irons looked as if vinegar had been sprinkled over them, and the grate was ornamented by a heap of red and blue wood-shavings, destined to be packed away when winter came, to do duty another summer; half-venetian blinds would neither shut nor open, the laths half in and half out—serving as resting places for generations of spiders; two gaudily-coloured pictures were mercifully placed out of sight, close up under the wide pink bordering that edged the blue paper, meandering round the room in a series of zig-zag lines. I had ample time to observe the apartment, for Helen bent over her desk, and the only interior noise was occasioned by the rapid passage of her pen

over the paper, and the hard breathings of her father. I could not see him from where I stood. Fearing I might put a valuable thought to flight by an untimely entrance, I retreated to the staircase window, which looked out upon a congregation of small red-walled gardens or yards, backed by a forest of high and low chimneys, pouring out quantities and varieties of smoke. Some of their enclosures were devoted to heaps of ashes and bleached bones, worn-out saucepans and spoutless tea-kettles, ; others were neatly gravelled, and crossed by lines, where clothes were rather left to *smut* than dry ; other walls were garnished by French beans, trailing up cords of various thickness, and variegated by nasturtiums ; while in the plot below, amid clay lumps and gravel, grew sea-pinks, small salad, one or two gooseberry-bushes, and clumps of starry London-pride—the borders formed of oyster-shells. The sounds from without told of the eloquence of the laundry, and the insanity of intoxication, the peevish sorrows of untended infancy, and the 'any-beer' knell of the public-house. It was so disgusting, that,

let her say what she would, I resolved Helen should not remain there—when suddenly, blythe, as if from the expanded down of its native soil, rose the clear jubilee of a sky-lark's note; the song thrilled loud and clear, bringing with it such a host of fresh, free memories, it awoke the poet from her dream, and she came to where I stood transfixed by an emotion which brought tears into my eyes.

"The presence of an angel amid the tombs, is it not?" she said, embracing me with all her old affection. "Do you know that I was unfeeling enough to offer the poor laundress, to whom it belongs, money for that bird? and she replied that it was the only pleasure she had in life—the only pleasure a human creature has in life hanging on the hour-numbered existence of a small bird!—I so despised myself for having made the offer; but those who know the want of money are just as much disposed to over-rate its value as those who possess no value but what their money gives them. I do all I can to repair the injury; I put on a clean frill every day, and submit my

Valenciennes to her mutilations without a word, and have twice been to Covent-garden to bring the lark a sod! Come in: my poor father is quite tranquil to-day."

Mr. Lyndsey was seated on a sofa, twisting and untwisting a sheet of paper: his hair was perfectly white, and his once portly person shrunk into the semblance of a lean, withered old man—he certainly looked twenty years older than he was; and then the fearful vacancy that had taken the place of every trace of intellect, or even instinct—the total absence of muscular strength, the half-closed eye-lids, the hanging mouth, the drooping head, the hands resting almost without power on the knees, and the feet, as he sat, turning inwards —stricken—completely stricken down, mindless, and utterly helpless!

"I want Helen—my child—my daughter Helen," he said, looking at me with glassy eyes; "do you know where my child Helen is?"

"Now, is not that agony?" whispered poor Helen, throwing herself by my side. "I have read and written for sixteen hours out of the

twenty-four, and never left him, and yet he does not know it—he never will know it—never can know it! Is it not piteous?—can you imagine anything so full of sorrow?"

"But he is calm and quiet?"

"Generally by day; and at any other time his being troublesome only means that he sobs and weeps like a baby—aye, he will weep for a full hour, until I wonder that the fountains of those lack-lustre eyes are not quite dried up; and then he will call for me a dozen times in the night."

"If he does not know you, you are no longer necessary to his comfort."

"God forbid *that!*" she answered impatiently; "I *am* necessary: for while he calls Helen, and does not know I am by his side, still he will take nothing but from my hand. Oh! if he could but have lived to know my triumph—to know the power I shall have, though perhaps but for a brief time—to know that I have nearly redeemed his name from shame—that his high principle of honesty will be as a monument on his grave. I need not be in such a place as this if I had not loved his

honour better than my own comfort—than what the world would call my own respectability. Oh, father! if you did but know——"

"It's the sum-total of the whole; and the first was not binding according to English law," he murmured feebly, unfolding the paper —"it's that which grieves me; where is Helen? —why did she leave me?"—and then tears showered over his face, and he sobbed and cried so, that I could not help but weep with him.

"This!" she exclaimed passionately, "this is what will one day drive me mad; and yet I fear, if he were to pass into other care, these tears would continue for ever, until the remnant of his existence was washed away in a flood of his own weeping!—my poor, poor father!"

What a sight it was!—that young, ardent, enthusiastic, inspiring, and inspired creature—the child of such as *that!* We both sat down and watched him, as he wept on, until, exhausted, his head drooped upon his bosom, and he slept,

"He will not wake for an hour at least."

said Helen in her usual tone. "I will but correct half-a-dozen lines, and then tell you of, or read you, my morning's work. This tiny desk—what a world of delight it is to me! my home, my throne, my world! While here bent thus above it, I can for the time imagine no greater happiness—no queen can feel more full of power—thoughts and words my slaves —no, not slaves, subjects rather; and if they will sometimes become refractory—strive and struggle for the mastery, I do as other monarchs do—I put them down!" She laughed lightly, but there was no mirth in that laughter. I sat in silence, but not long; she had soon finished.

"And now, dearest," she said, while her eyes sparkled, and her mouth looked absolutely handsome in its smiles; "and now, dearest NOBODY, I will tell you my greatest of all secrets; I have written a play—a mingling of tragedy and comedy, and yet neither the one nor the other—an attempt which, however great, I do not fear; I think I have strengthened its weak points, and given it —— but no matter, when you see it you can judge."

"It is so difficult to get a play even looked at. Managers are a species of living ogres—unbending tyrants; and then the people, in whose power you are, all want everything their own way," I suggested.

"My manager is a sweet, civil-spoken gentlemen, who overwhelms me with compliments (on paper); and my actors I am determined shall be ALL, with a few exceptions, enraptured with their parts. Now the play is to be read in the green-room to-morrow, and you must be there!—you must not say me nay; you go as my friend. I shall give you a pass-port. I can rely only on you, and you will be a faithful reporter of all that passes."

"But is your play accepted?" I inquired, in bewildered astonishment.

"Certainly."

"And the manager does not know you?"

"He knows my better part—my play; but he has never seen me; what need is there that he should? I enjoy the mystery; I will never be seen until my fame is too well-grounded to be shaken. There was another person whom I had thought of asking to hear my play read;

but Heaven knows how glad I am I can do without him."

"Was it Marley?" I inquired. She did not scream, or faint, or seek the support of a chair, or do anything that young ladies are supposed to do when electrified by 'some well-known name;' if she changed colour I did not see it. for she turned to pin together the papers she had been writing: it took her no longer to do this than it ought. Then she looked at me with no more trace of emotion than though the man had been a stranger, and said:—

"Do you know him? We met him last night; but, if possible, I do not wish him to know I am in England yet I dare say he recognised me—he is lynx-eyed."

"Have you known him long?"

"Yes, some time."

"And well?"

"My dear Nobody, it proves how very little you understand the world, to ask me if I know him *well;* no woman ever knows a man *well;* we know just as much as they desire we should know, and that is all. I often smile when I hear young ladies talk of knowing

their lovers *well*, of understanding them *well*, of believing them all they seem! And you, dearest, to ask me if I know such a man as Edmund Marley *well!* Why, he is the perfection of a man of the world—I know that; and knowing that, I shall never try to know more of him than he pleases, and that, I suspect, is to know nothing; so that you see my knowledge is very limited."

"He is going to be married," I said, half smiling.

"I dare say! When a man of his temperament and character arrives at a certain age, he wants some one to give him coffee and character, tea and comfort, to make his house the fashion, and bear the ill-temper he dare not show at the club—a wife saves her husband from many a bilious attack. I always knew he would marry, but hardly thought he would think it pleasant so soon. He cannot be out of fashion yet; and I did not fancy he would like to share his celebrity; but perhaps his wife may be one of those simple, loving things who will be content to live in the light of his glory to the end of her days."

"The lady he has chosen," I replied (and I was somewhat piqued for Florence), "has a perfect knowledge of her duties, and no desire to shine except in their performance." Helen let fall the papers she had retained until that moment, and holding out her hands, seized mine within hers, looking full into my eyes, while her own were in an instant filled with tears.

"Why should *you* say *that* to *me?* How have I deserved so keen a reproof? Has she not had a tender mother to teach her these duties by the loving practice of her own, in a prosperous, happy home, where their exercise is happiness?—dear friends to watch and cherish, love and praise, away from the war of the world?—no ill-feelings roused by misery, no knowledge forced upon her by adversity?—has she been forced to make election between two things, either to lay down and see her father (and she pointed to where Mr. Lyndsey still slumbered) starve, or resolve to cultivate and use the power God has given her, and make the world, that would have trampled on her—her slave?"

Helen saw I shrank at her last sentence, and, with eyes filled by tears, she continued:—

"Do not, I implore you, judge harshly of the young unshielded woman, whose mother never treated her with kindness, much less love, and who has fought through life unaided and alone —do not judge me hardly—remember what my childhood was. I know that I am not what you would wish; the very endurance, the very knowledge necessary for my own preservation must make me unlike what you believe woman ought to be. I may set more value than you think right upon this Fame—this breath of popularity, but it is my existence; what else have I to live for? I may despise the thing itself, even while the breeze wafts me onward; but what other reward have I for the long, long struggle with the rapacity of publishers—the ignorance of editors—the taunts of the illiberal against a working woman, —the long, long nights and days of labour? and, without one ray of light or love in my own home. Just think of my having none to love or care for, or encourage me—think of my father!—the breathing form, that is all—a body without a soul; he never had a mind to direct me; but the last throb of his feeling was

for his child! yet now he does not know me! Imagine all this, and then picture, if you can, the fearful stillness, the loneliness of these days, the deep readings of hearts and minds, and motives, which they gave me; and when at the house of one acqaintance, whom I did not like, but found it needful to tolerate, I met at long intervals troops of human beings, they did me no good, for my heart did not open to them, and I used to return to my labour, pleased for a time that I was alone. I had a right purpose to accomplish. My father's debts were not large nor numerous, but I resolved to pay them, and that before I devoted my earnings to one luxury for myself. I have steeped my head in water, and trimmed my lamp, and worked; and when morning was fairly come, extinguished that lamp, and again steeping my head, folded my hair around it, and worked on. This had its stern reward and my purpose was accomplished, and then the throbbing—burning desire—this passion for the power—the influence—the immortality—yes —that is it—the *immortality* which follows success—came upon me with tenfold strength, I desired, *I do* desire, to be known and

honoured in my own land, to bring another proof to lordly man (though well I know he will detest me for so doing) that the mind is of no sex! I would rather never have been born, than sink into a nameless grave!"

"Oh Helen," I exclaimed "you forget how many saints, who are now angels in heaven—have passed from earth—their names unhonoured and unknown—and yet the good and holy seed sown by them, in silence and obscurity, has fructified and flourished in their descendants—no one is nameless who is a registered follower of *Him*, who died to save us.

"Oh,"she exclaimed, in a tone of the deepest and tenderest melancholy. "We differ sadly—it is not given to your calm, well regulated nature to understand the burning desire for fame, which still cries—forward—forward!'

"Helen! why not upward—upward?'"

"My NOBODY, you must *not* preach to me just now, I am fever-stricken, and cannot bear it, and surely, it is not fair to judge me, self-acting almost from childhood, as you would judge those who slumber on roses, and wake to all the endearments of home and love? Had I been so nurtured, I should

perhaps have been—what was it you said?—but I do not wish to recal it; only do not judge me harshly; do not—do not, dearest—now or hereafter! this thirsting—panting—toiling—praying for an immortality, which, after all, it may never be designed that dust and ashes should enjoy—may yet be lifted on angels' wings above this world. I have had visions—obscured by tears and agonies of self-reproach, terrors, which death itself could not darken, that I was not working out the purpose of this gift (for *I have the gift*) according to the will of Him who gave it! I have not sought to screen, but to beautify. I have desired rather to dazzle than to enlighten—but I am young still! too proud to seek for sympathy; yes, I know you are there; but you are too calm, too passionless to understand me; but have patience with me, and pray for me—pray for me always, and do not judge me harshly.

This appeal was poured forth far more eloquently than I can repeat it—most eloquently—and I was more than angry with myself for having said anything to wound her; and when at last she drew her handkerchief

from her face, and looked again brightly into mine, I felt that the only earthly hope to win her to seek what would yield her more happiness than fame could ever give to woman, must arise from her meeting some object upon whom the affections of her heart, and the treasures of her mind could be bestowed, and by whom they would be valued. But the present was now to be thought of, and I said so.

"Yes," she replied, "THE PRESENT, it is very true, the cares of the present, the wants of the present; the author's FUTURE comes only to the grave. But you have not told me whom Marley is about to marry?"

"Your cousin Florence."

"Indeed! but she is a child, is she not?"

"A few months older than yourself."

"And handsome?"

"Yes."

"Then she is good, I am sure of it; no beautiful woman was ever naturally evil; but I will not see her, will not have her know that I still live, until after the fate of my play is decided; I will not be sympathized with, or 'felt for' by my rich relations. I could not

bear that—no, I will think of nothing till that is over."

"But you must leave this horrid den," I said; "these sights and sounds are enough to set to flight all poetic imaginings."

"When the mind is pre-occupied, as mine has been, it matters little; I have as good a taste for magnificence as any one, but I must have means for its display; if *that* comes, I can indulge it with an unblushing cheek. Here I shall never be found out. But enough of myself—now for this play. The manager has not a notion who I am, or that I am in England; the thing will be read with closed doors, none but those who are cast in the characters will be present; you used to say, I had a talent for secrets."

"A dangerous talent, and at strange variance with other portions of your character," I replied, Marley's vile words rising like phantoms around me.

She smiled. "Well, I have the bump, I suppose; but perhaps you are not read in the noble science of phrenology; I can only tell you, that if I had believed it (which I did *not*), their German chief should never have

told over my predispositions—and their penalties."

I laughed; but Helen looked really angry, and moved about the room to dispel her irritation, speaking all the time.

"You must be there — at the theatre I mean—at two, and you can be with me at five or six; I wish I could transfer my secretiveness to you, during your green-room sojourn, for I fancy you will be strictly examined." She sat down and wrote a note of introduction, with her usual rapidity, and, deaf as she certainly was to all ordinary sounds, the least change in the evenness of her father's breathing, the least movement he made, at once attracted her attention, and she looked anxiously round at him, and then recommenced her occupation. Under any other circumstances I should have been amused by her manner, which, though older, was in nothing changed. She never exacted, and yet there was an implied reliance, that whatever she desired to have done, should be done; it did not occur to her as far as I was—or, as I afterwards observed, others were—concerned, that she should be opposed; and yet no living

creature ever appreciated kindness more gratefully, while her keen perceptions enabled her at once to distinguish the real from the counterfeit.

During my drive to Mr. Middleton's I had leisure to reflect on what my first appearance in a green-room would be, and I could not but smile at the idea of my being so suddenly thrust among a class of persons for whom I entertained an instinctive dread. I did not find Mr. Middleton infected by the excitement which seemed to have taken possession of the household. The old butler, as he bowed me up stairs, could not avoid saying, "I suppose you have heard, madam? my dear young lady —and the gentleman—every one says he is the finest gentleman in London!"

"Florence waited a long time for you," said her father, "and then she was obliged to go somewhere."

"But I did not say I would call, my dear sir," I answered; for I do not like to have my character assailed on the score of punctuality.

"No, but we thought you would; you always come when you are most wanted, and therefore Florence relies upon your being with her all day to-morrow."

"For once I shall lose my good character with you; I cannot come."

"Indeed! are you engaged!"

"I am, I am going to—" it was just out. I paused.

"There," said my good friend, "you were going to betray a secret: I know you were: however, I will not ask you, will not tempt you—only say I am very sorry for it; for your being here to-morrow would have been important to us all. However, I am sure no common engagement would keep you from us at this time."

"I can be here until one, or half-past twelve," I said.

"Thank you, we are always glad to have you with us; but Florence wished for you most particularly between two and six."

"The hours during which I shall be engaged; will not the day after do as well?"

"I believe not," said Mr. Middleton; "I wish it would; for I tell you, whom I always confide in, that I shudder when I think of this marriage; why can this be? In every respect Mr. Marley seems the person suited for her; I can find no fault with him, I have

tried to, and yet I cannot like him. I have not been what the world calls ambitious for my child, on the contrary, I have rather withdrawn from the circle where high connexions might have been made, because I would not have even the semblance that an iota of her feelings were sacrificed—I could not endure that—and so I kept her back, perhaps too strictly, within our own sphere. When I see how perfectly happy she is—how devoted, too, and proud of the distinguished man who has chosen her—instead of sympathizing with her prospects, I wonder what her waking from that dream will be! Mrs. Dellamere seems under the spell of witchcraft; poor dear soul, she is quite in ecstacies, but *I* cannot rejoice; when I attempt it, my spirits sink; I pray, and yet tremble; this life is a sad perplexity, and I feel the uncertainty of all things more than ever. How we seek to establish and strengthen what crumbles away from us on every side! how we set the jewels of our existence in fine gold, and build our hopes on foundations that seem imperishable! and yet our very carefulness aids in their destruction. My own beloved Florence! I have so refined

her mind—I have so sought to polish, to purify, to regulate it, that if she discover anything in her husband—anything short of what her standard is—she will pine to death I know this, and I have no faith in Marley; it is not because at times I perceive a want of keeping in his manner; I know, that though not as fastidious as I used to be about trifles, I am fastidious still, and sometimes he has shocked, by some almost nameless act, my preconceived and established notions of high breeding. But he has lived much abroad, and habits change. I cannot conceal the fact from myself, that I lack faith in him; yet his reputation is without a blemish, his fortune ample; he is punctual in all religious observances, and never utters an irreverent word; my anxiety for my child's happiness amounts to a positive agony—and I dare not tell her so."

I would have combated this feeling if I could; as it was, I could only instance how hard it was for fathers to be pleased who had such children as Florence—how highly Mr. Marley was thought of by the world, and how devoted he was to our beloved Florence; and Mr. Middleton said 'yes,' 'true,' 'very true,'

to all I said, and sighed at each admission. I never saw him so unlike himself—so restless; and, when leading me to the carriage, he paused on the stairs, and taking me into his library, withdrew the curtain that veiled his wife's portrait. "You see," he said, "that picture: you see it—it is almost herself; and at night, when I pray before it, it is in some lights so very like, that I have called out, in the deep agony of my soul, 'Speak to me!' Well, as surely as you see that picture on that wall, so surely did I see HER, as in life, by my bedside last night. I looked earnestly at her—and, as I looked, the foot-curtains drew back, and I saw in the glass which fills the pier between the windows, the shadow of the communion-table—the high windows of coloured glass behind, the tables of the law between the communion rails, hassocks, books, clergymen—all as it is in our own church; and in front of the communion-table, where it is right to be at such a ceremony, stood Florence and Marley—the semblance perfect. The book was opened; the figure that had been at my side glided into the group in a moment, closed the book, and, taking Florence by the

hand, led her to the tomb—the monument which I erected to my wife's memory at Little Hampton. They disappeared together. You will tell me it was an illusion: I know it—what else could it be!—it could be nothing else. My brain was heated—granted; but it *was* strange."

"Last night," I said, "you fancied you saw this?"

"Last night."

"Dwelling upon it, as you cannot avoid doing, if you sleep in the same bed—the glass in the same position—it is more than a chance your dream may be repeated to-night. Take my advice: you have a friend at Richmond-on-the-Hill—sleep at his house to-night; change the close air of town for the bracing air of the loveliest hill in England, and your nerves will not be assailed again. You owe it to yourself and Florence to make this effort, and I am sure it will be successful. I never knew a morbidity of this kind that a bracing ride and a total change of scene did not disperse; if you yield to it, your whole nervous system will become deranged."

"You are quite right," he said—"quite—

quite right. I can leave this evening, and with perfect propriety, for Marley is gone out of town—was called away unexpectedly last night, and will not return before to-morrow morning. Florence will think I go to communicate the glad tidings of her marriage to my old friend. I feel relieved by having told you; perhaps you will call early to-morrow. I will return rather early from Richmond; but there is no necessity for my being here before two o'clock, and I feel assured the change will do me good; besides, I am almost certain that my old chum Beauchamp must have met Marley abroad: they were at Malta at the same time. It is altogether a fortunate thought of yours."

He looked quite another man when I bade him adieu.

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